

12 Ad

SEVERAL
DISCOURSES

Concerning the
Terms of Acceptance

WITH
G O D.

IN WHICH

- I. The Terms themselves are distinctly laid down;
as they are proposed to Christians in the New
Testament. And
II. Several false Notions of the Conditions of
Salvation are considered.

PARTICULARLY,

Of being saved by Faith.	Of Repentance.
Of trusting to External Performances.	Of the Example of the Thief on the Cross.
Of the Power of Charity to cover Sins.	Of trusting to a Deth-bed Sorrow.
Of relying upon the Merits of Christ.	Of the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard.
Of Man's Weakness, and God's Grace,	Of depending upon Amendment in time to come.

By BENJAMIN HOADLY, M. A. Rector of St.
Peter's Poor (now Lord Bishop of *Winchester*.)

The SIXTH EDITION.

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21



TO THE
H O N O U R E D
Mrs. *HOWLAND*,
O F
STREATHAM in SURRY,

These SERMONS (as a Publick Testimony of the Sincereſt GRATITUDE and Highest RESPECT,) are
moſt humbly Dedicated,

By Her moſt obliged

A N D

moſt obedient, Servant,

BENJ. HOADLY.

TO THE
HONORABLE
MRS. HOWLAND

27 BATHAM STREET

THE
HONORABLE
MRS. HOWLAND
27 BATHAM STREET
BOSTON
MASS.

By the most obliged

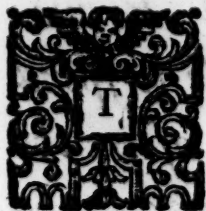
and obedient servant

THE
PREFACE.

TO THE
PARISHIONERS

O. F

St. Peter's Poor, London.



*THE following Sermons,
were first Framed, and
then Preached, with a
sincere Design of fixing in
your Minds such Notions of Religion,*

A 3

and

and of the Terms of Salvation, as might be the Foundation of a regular Course of Holiness here, and of an eternal State of Happiness, hereafter. And they are now Published, in order to carry forward more extensively the same good End.

*It hath been long my Opinion, that the Bad Lives of Christians are not owing so much to their Ignorance of what is truly Evil, and Sinful, as to a certain secret Hope of God's Favour, built upon something separated from the constant Practice of all that is Virtuous and Praiseworthy. This made me chuse to spend some time in establishing, after the most unexceptionable manner, the true Grounds upon which only it is reasonable to build our Expectations
of*

of Happiness ; and in demonstrating the great Danger and Weakness of depending on any other Methods. My chief Study hath been to do this, not only by the most convincing Arguments, but with the greatest Plainness of Expression : having had no other View, either in the Choice, or Prosecution of this Design, but that of being useful, in a Matter of the highest Importance. And if these Sermons shall, through God's Blessing, either awaken, or confirm, in any Christians, a true Sense of Religion, and of the great Design of Christianity ; I shall have a Satisfaction within, hardly to be expressed in Words.

I have made them of such a Length, that any one of them may

be read, either in the Family, or the Closet, within the compass of half an hour. And because they will most probably, as they are designed, be read, every one, singly in it's Order; I have therefore endeavoured rather to make, than to avoid, the Repetition of such things, as either are of so great importance, as to be equally necessary on several Occasions; or serve to make every Discourse, by it self, the more complete and useful.

I am very sensible of the Obligations I lie under, to contribute my utmost towards your right Understanding, and conscientious Practice, of true Religion. It hath pleased God, by a particular Providence, to make my Power to serve you
much

much less than my Will: nor am I insensible of my many Imperfections in the discharge of those parts of my Office which I am still able to perform. But of this you your selves are Witnesses; (and these Sermons will be some Testimony of it to the World;) that the Points which I have chiefly, I may say constantly, inculcated upon you from the Pulpit, have been the great, undisputed, Duties of the Gospel, and the indispensable Necessity of an Holy Life. You see, I would willingly find out something that might atone a little for my Defects in other parts of my Office: and I can think of nothing better than this, that I have carefully endeavoured to point out to you the true way to Heaven. Nor can I possibly

P R E F A C E.

possibly give you a greater Demonstration than this, how truly I desire your Happiness; and how sincerely I am

Your Faithful Friend,

and Servant,

BENJ. HOADLY.

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405.



Concerning

Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

S E R M O N I.

LUKE X. The latter part of the 25th
Verse.

*Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal
Life?*



HIS is the Enquiry of one SERM.
of the Students and Interpre- I.
ters of the *Law* of *Moses*:
who, hearing of our Lord's
Behaviour, and Pretensions to so great a
Character as that of the *Messiah* sent by
God to instruct Mankind in the right
way to Happiness, came, amongst others,
either out of Curiosity, or some worse
Principle, to try what Answer he would
give to so important a Question as this in
the Text, *What shall I do to inherit eter-
nal Life?* i. e. What are the great Points
B of

SERM. of Practice which can recommend me,

- I. who am a *Jew*, and adhere to the *Law* of *Moses*, to the Favour of God? For by our Lord's Answer it is plain, that this *Question* related to the chief practical Duties of Religion; and that it was not our Lord's Design to give the *Enquirer* a particular Account of the Conditions of Justification, and Terms of Acceptance, which *He*, and his *Apostles*, were in due time to lay open to the World. He appeals, We see, to the *Enquirer* himself, what the great Precepts of the *Law* were; and afterwards declares that an exact observance of those two comprehensive Duties, of loving God, and our Neighbour, would entitle him to *eternal Life*: Duties, so comprehensive indeed, that to them may be reduced all that is good in any Religion in the World, and all that can possibly render us acceptable to God. But though this summary Declaration answered well our blessed Lord's Purpose at that time, as it was a sufficient Reply to the present *Enquirer*: yet it was the great Business of his Divine Mission to enter more particularly into this *grand Debate*; to promulgate to the World more expressly,
and

and more fully, those *Terms* and *Conditions*, SERM.
upon which Almighty God, for the sake of I.
what he undertook to do and suffer in this ~~~~~
World, will accept Mankind, and make
those happy, who cannot pretend to a sin-
less and perfect Obedience to his Laws, but
stand conscious to themselves of many past
Transgressions of them. Since therefore,
this was the professed Business of *Him*, in
whom we believe: it becomes us all, if we
have any thoughts of Happiness, to address
ourselves to the same Person, with a very
serious Curiosity; and to enquire what it is
that is expected at our Hands, in order to
our Justification, and final Acquittance
from the guilt of our Sins, at the great
Day. This is the *Enquiry* which is of the
utmost importance to us.

BUT it will be proper here to observe,
that, with respect to such as have been edu-
cated in any other false *Religion*, or *Wor-
ship*, and have contracted the guilt of ma-
ny Sins, the first part of the *Enquiry*, and
of the *Answer* to it, will be somewhat dif-
ferent from what it must be, with respect to
such as have been educated in the knowledge
and belief of *Christianity*, and taken the

SERM. Profession of it upon themselves; and af-

I. ter that contracted the guilt of wilful Sins:
 as may appear to any who seriously consult the *New Testament*. For the *first Enquiry* there made by such as were at any time touched to the Heart, and uneasy under the consciousness of their former Sins, was, how they should be saved from this guilt which they had already contracted; or what they should do to be acquitted from these Sins committed in their former State. And the *Answer* we find was, that their receiving Christ for their Master; their first Faith, and believing in him, should have that Efficacy with Almighty God, that all their past Sins, committed before this *Faith*, should be cancelled; and *they* looked upon as just persons, with respect to all that was past.

THIS matter of the *Heathen* and *Jewish* World being justified, or acquitted from all past guilt, by their *Faith*, or belief in Jesus Christ, having been strenuously asserted, and fully expressed by the *Apostles*, and especially St *Paul*; many weak and unstable Men have built such Notions upon this, as have been, and may be, of pernicious consequence

of Acceptance.

5

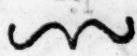
consequence to *Christians*, under the Gos-
pel-State, and after they have receiv'd and
professed this *Faith* in *Christ*: arguing as
if a strong *Faith* or *Confidence* in *Jesus*
Christ, and his Merits, would do all; ac-
quit from all Sins; and render the wicked
Christian spotless at last; and present him
blameless before the Throne of God.
Whereas it is manifest that, after this *first*
Justification, and acquittance, was obtain-
ed by means of believing in *Jesus Christ*;
this very believing, or *Faith*, brought the
Believer under the most strict Obligations
imaginable; more in Number, and severer
in their Nature, than the Man was under
before; and these bound upon him under
the penalty of God's eternal Displeasure.
This is as plain in the *New Testament*, as
Words can make it. But of this *Justifica-*
tion which professed *Christians* expect at
any time to be wrought for them by *Faith*,
or *Confidence* only, I shall have occasion
to speak more in the farther prosecution of
my present Design. At present I will on-
ly observe to you, that, when it is enquired
in the *New Testament*, *What shall we do*
to be saved? and when it is answered to
B 3 the

SERM. the *Enquirers*, or laid down, that *to be-*

I. *lieve* and *to be baptized*, or that *Faith*
 will save them, or the like; it is only meant, that they who do not believe already shall be acquitted from their past Sins, or saved from the Guilt of them, by believing, and coming into the *Terms* required by the *Gospel*; or that the first step to their Salvation, and that which will put them into a safe way, is *Faith*, or taking *Christ* for their Master, and being entered into his Religion. Or else, *Faith* is taken for the whole *Gospel-method*; for the whole of what is required in *that*: and so, it is the intent of these Expressions to signify that it is this method which only can save them; not the *Law* of *Moses*, or the Institutions of the *Heathen* World, in which they had before been educated. And it is plain that all this related to such only as had not before professed, or taken upon themselves, the belief of the *Gospel*; and toucheth not the *Case* in which we are concerned, who have been educated in this belief, or long professed it. *Christians* of later Ages are generally of this sort: and it is their own case and condition, not that of others,
 about

of Acceptance.

7

about which their *Enquiry* ought to be; SERM.
and which it concerns the *Ministers* of the I.
Gospel principally to consider. 

THIS is my Design, and what I propose to do as fully as I can: as well by laying down *positively* what is the true answer to this *Enquiry*; as by considering and refuting those false *Answers* which Men have framed to themselves, from their own vain Wishes, fortified with some mistaken and misapplied Passages in the Word of God. But, before I come to the main Design, it is very expedient,

I. To propose distinctly what the great *Question*, and *Enquiry* is, which concerns *Us*, who have taken upon ourselves the profession of the *Christian Religion*; and continue in that Profession: that so the *Answer* to it may be the better understood.

II. To consider the great importance of this *Enquiry*; and the hazard of mistaking in it: that we may be the more solicitous to find out the only true account of this matter; and the more guarded against any Deceit and Delusion in a business of such moment,

B 4

III. To

SERM. III. To shew the only method of coming to a true Resolution of this *Question*; and where it is that we may expect such an account of this Affair, as we may safely, and securely, depend upon. Now,

I. THE great *Enquiry*, in which we are concerned, is this, What it is that the *Gospel* requires of Men, who believe in Jesus Christ, and profess his *Faith*, and own him for their *Master*; in order to their acquittance from the punishment of any wilful Sins, which they have at any time committed, during their profession of his Religion; and to their final Justification before God at the Day of Judgment; and to their eternal Happiness after this.

THAT many *Christians* do fall into great and wilful Sins after their *Baptism*; after their knowledge of the Truth; and after they have taken upon themselves the profession of their most holy Religion; is matter of daily Observation, and of daily Experience. That the very best have not, in every part of their past Lives, done exactly what they know they ought to have done; that, in some past Instances or other, of Thought, Word, or Deed, they have had experience

experience of some sudden Passion, or some SERM.
latent Weakness, which, by a greater de- I.
gree of constant Watchfulness, might have 
been prevented; is likewise evident: and
by themselves always made matter of Con-
fession and Humiliation. That there is a
method of Reconciliation proposed in the
Gospel to both these sorts of *Christians*;
and *Terms* laid down in it, on which
Christian Sinners, if I may so speak, shall
be accepted and acquitted, is plain from
many Exhortations in the *New Testament*
to such *Christians* as had sinned; and from
the Behaviour of the *Apostles* with respect to
such; as well as from the Absurdities fol-
lowing from the contrary Supposition:
which would render the *Gospel* a most in-
effectual Institution, debarring every indi-
vidual professor of it, upon one single, sud-
den, wilful Transgression, from all future
Hopes of Happiness; (and *who then can be*
saved?) or a most pernicious Institution,
turning every *Christian* into a desperate Sin-
ner, by allowing no Hopes of any benefit
from his recovering himself.

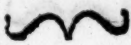
BUT whatever *Terms*, or *Conditions* are
allowed us, after relapse into Sin, or con-
tinuance

SERM. tinuance in it, we know they are granted
 I. for the sake of *Jesus Christ*; in consideration of what he did and suffered for this very purpose, that these *Terms* and *Conditions* might be granted to *Christians*. This therefore, I say, is the *Question* about which our greatest Concern is to be employed, What those *Terms* and *Conditions* are, on which, for the sake of *Jesus Christ*, God will acquit us of our Sins, and at last make us eternally happy. For tho' it be for the sake of *Christ*, that he will do this at all; yet he expects something at our own Hands: And it is upon such and such Conditions only, that for *his sake* He will accept us; without the performance of which He leaves us no room to hope for any Benefit from the Merits of *Christ*. All that *Christ* has done, and suffered, for our sakes, was only in order to the settling these *Conditions*: but what We are to do, according to this *Treaty* and *Compact*, in which he is the *Mediator*; This belongs to us chiefly to enquire after.

II. The importance of this *Enquiry* plainly appears from the account of it, which I have now given. Our acceptance with
 God;

of Acceptance.

II

God ; our Justification ; our acquittance SERM.
from the guilt of our Sins ; our final and I.
eternal Happiness, depend entirely upon our 
due Apprehensions, and effectual Sense, of
this matter. If we employ our Minds se-
riously about it ; and come to settle in
them true Notions, and a just account of it :
it will be the Fountain of all Happiness to
us ; by being the Foundation of such a Pra-
ctice, and such a Conduct of our Lives, as
will end in Glory, and Peace for ever. And
the importance of it is enlarged, and height-
en'd, when we consider the vast and un-
speakable Danger of mistaking in this *grand*
Enquiry ; that if we do, through Prejudice,
or Passion, or love to this World, or fond-
ness for carnal Pleasure, entertain wrong
Notions of this Affair, they will lead us
into a wrong method of Action, and con-
clude us at last under inexpressible Misery :
the Misery, not only of deprivation, or
being debarr'd from the Happiness of Hea-
ven, and the Communications of God's Fa-
vour ; but that of enduring positive Tor-
ments, the Wrath of God, and the Punish-
ments threatened by his *Son* in the *Gospel*.
The Consideration of this made our Lord
so

SERM. so earnest to free the Minds of Men from

I.  all false Surmises about the great business upon which he came into the World; that neither *Unbelievers*, nor *Believers*, might mistake his Errand. The consideration of this made the *Apostles*, and particularly *St Paul*, so frequent in their Warnings against all Inclination to be *deceived* in this matter: well knowing that *Christians*, even in those first Days, were in great danger, from the inward Motions of their own Lusts and Passions, and the outward Hardships of *Persecution*, to be misled by such false *Apostles*, and false *Teachers*, as would sooth their present Inclinations, and flatter them into vain and delusive Hopes.

LET not therefore any thing either within us, or without us; let not any thing of this World; (Profit, or Honour, or Pleasure,) lay a Bias upon our Minds in this *Enquiry*. Neither Profit, nor Honour, nor Pleasure can, in the least avail us, when we have made the fatal mistake: nor can any present Gratification countervail the loss of all Happiness to all Eternity. What therefore can induce us to be so careless, or so weak, as to be willingly imposed upon in
a *Question*,

a *Question*, upon the just Resolution of SERM.
 which *Eternity* depends ; and the false ac- I.
 count of which, once permitted to enter 
 into our Minds, must draw after it more
 Misery, and Unhappiness than we can now
 conceive? Since therefore it is an Enquiry
 of such vast, and unspeakable importance ;
 let us

III. CONSIDER the true Method of coming to a Resolution of this *grand Question* ; and where it is that we may expect such an Account of this Affair, as we may safely and securely depend upon. Now it being a Matter of infinite Grace and Mercy that Almighty God will enter into any *Treaty* at all with a sinful World ; or come to any *Terms* with his rebellious Subjects : it is very evident that the Persons immediately commission'd by him, or by the *Person* whom he sent into this World upon so good an Account, are those only, on whom we can safely and with Honour rely in this Affair. It depended on his Will, to make the *Conditions* what he should think agreeable to his own unalterable Perfections, and to the eternal and unvariable Nature of Just and Right. To promulgate these Conditions,

SERM. tions, and to give an Account of these

I. *Terms*, He sent *Jesus Christ* into the World :
 who in his Life-time did it, as fully as was
 requisite to his present Design ; and, for
 the same End, immediately commission'd
 his *Apostles* to preach the glad Tidings to
 the whole World, and to lay open more
 fully these Terms ; and conducted them by
 an infallible Spirit, to secure them from all
 Error in this Matter. Whither then should
 we go but to him ? for *he hath the Words*
of eternal Life ; and to his *Apostles* ? for
 they were the *immediate Embassadors* of
 Christ, *beseeking us to be reconcil'd to God*,
 and preaching the *Conditions* of this Recon-
 ciliation. It is in the *Preachings* of Christ
 himself, and in the *Writings* of these *Apo-*
stles, that we can securely hope to find the
 only Account of this Enquiry that will avail
 us any thing.

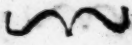
As for our selves, and all others, who
 succeed in teaching, and feeding the Flock
 of *Christ* ; we cannot pretend to any *new*
Revelations. It is our Business only to ex-
 plain the *old* ; to convince Men of any Er-
 rors disagreeable to the written Word of
 God ; and to lay before them, in the best
 manner

manner possible, what is contained, and S E R M.
 proposed in it. We cannot make the *Terms* I.
of Salvation what we, or many others, may 
 wish. They are fix'd by those who only had
 Authority to fix them, from God, and his
 Holy Spirit: and we must not vary from
 those who have declar'd long ago the whole
 Will of God. Other *Churches* may pre-
 tend to be themselves, (consider'd distinctly
 from the *Apostles* and their Doctrine,) the
Ground and Pillar of Truth; and not on-
 ly the Keepers, and Guardians of the *lively*
Oracles of God: but our Church declareth
 the contrary, and professeth to be only the
Medium, and *Interpreter*, by which the
 Will of God already settled may be made
 known to the People; and openly proclaims
 that the *Articles* and *Terms of Salvation*
 are long ago fix'd and determin'd, in such
 sort, that it is an invading the Province of
 God himself to pretend to make new ones,
 or to alter them into what they were not,
 at the Beginning of the *Gospel*. Let that
Unchristian Church, therefore, answer for it,
 that debars the People from consulting those
 Books which alone are able to *make them*
wise unto Salvation; and imposeth upon
 them

SERM. them Traditions and Customs, and Doc-

I. trines of her own, which make void the
 Will of God, and render ineffectual all his
 gracious Offers of Salvation to the World; that hides the true Word of God from all Communication with the Light; and teacheth those who depend upon her, to seek Salvation, and to learn the *Terms* of it, from such as impose what they please instead of them. But let any *Church* upon Earth, or any *Ministers* of the *Gospel*, pretend to what they please: whether they speak Truth or Falshood; whether they lighten or increase the burthen of these *Conditions*, or fix them where they ought to be; the *New Testament* is the Standard to which all must be brought to be tried; and by which it is the Duty of all to examine, whether they be truly directed, or invited aside into paths of Darkness and Error.

THE great Lines of the Gospel, and those parts of it which declare the Terms of Salvation, have no obscurity in them, but lie level to all who have capacity to understand what *God*, and *Salvation*, and *Happiness*, mean. It will not therefore, in this grand Affair, be a sufficient Apology for any,

at the great Day of Accounts, to say that S E R M.
they followed their *Leaders*; that they de- I.
pended upon their Doctrine; and swallow- 
ed whatever they told them about the Will
of God: because the *New Testament* hath
been transmitted down for their Use; to
teach all Christians what is their Duty, as
well as to guide others in their Doctrine
concerning it. The greatest part of it was
preached, and written, to the *Laity*: from
whence it appears, That they were thought
Judges of what so much concerned them;
and that it was their business to take their
Notions of the *Gospel*, from Those who
were immediately sent by God, and Christ,
to propose it to the World. The utmost
that can be said for depending on any other,
since that time, is, that it is probable, or to
be hoped, that they will not deceive or mis-
lead us. But how weak an Excuse will this
prove, when we know that our *Eternity* de-
pends upon it; that there are Writings which
cannot deceive us; and that, if we seriously
and constantly advise with them, no human
Error, which doth not arise from any wilful
Crime in ourselves, shall be charged upon us?
Could you not have consulted these Scrip-
C tures,

SERM. tures, and seen whether these things were

I. so, as your *Church*, or your *Leaders taught*
 you? will be a very sufficient *Reply* to all
 who think to find Refuge, at last, in depending upon any other Authority in so weighty a matter. And were it not out of regard to some secular or By-end; from want of Desire to know the Truth, or an affected unwillingness to alter the accustomed methods of Action: no one could be so senseless as to depend upon the Word of any *modern Authority*; when it was in his Power to go himself to the *original Covenant*. No Man acts in this manner, in the Case of his worldly Concerns: or in any Point which may affect his *Body*, or his *Estate*, in this transitory World; and this will serve to condemn All who are guilty of so great a neglect, in a concern infinitely more weighty and important.

AND if it will not avail any at last, that they have depended upon the Word of any *Church*, or *Churchman*, upon Earth: much less will it avail them, that they have consulted with Flesh and Blood; and can plead the Dictates of *them* against the Dictates of God himself. And yet it is to be feared,
 that

that many Men, in this *Question*, upon SERM.
 which their eternal State depends, instead I.
 of consulting our *Lord*, and his *Apostles*,
 what is truly required of them in order to
 Justification and Salvation, turn their
 Thoughts another way: and consult their
 own Lusts and Passions, and Tempers, and
 Designs in this World, what will be the most
 consistent with them; and how far they will
 let them go towards a Resolution of this
Enquiry. But this is even to advise with
Satan himself, and with all the Enemies of
 God, and of a Man's own Happiness, what
 it is that Almighty God requires; and what
 it is that will bring him to that Happiness,
 which it is *their* Desire, he should never ar-
 rive at.

THUS have I gone over the *three prin-*
cipal Points of which I thought it proper to
 speak, before we enter upon the *Debate* it
 self. There are some other *Particulars*,
 which are consequences from *these*: and
 which it is likewise highly useful for us to
 consider, in order to make our *Enquiry* the
 more effectual, and successful. But these
 I must reserve for another opportunity.

10
of the
that again, when, in the 19th century
which then eternal life depends, in fact
of continuing our lives, and the way
what is now required of them in order to
justification and salvation, that their
I thought another way and count that
own I had in fact, and I cannot find
Bible, the Word, I will be the next
I understand with them; and now I am with
let them go towards a Reformation of the
I know, that this is the way to arrive with
God, and of a man's own happiness, and
it is that, I think, God's answer, and where
it is that we bring them to that happiness,
which is a new birth, I would never
five
That is, I think, the way to
open, I think, I think it is proper to
look, I think we cannot find the Bible is
it. I think the four other parts of the
which are, I think, the four parts of the
which it is, I think, the four parts of the
consider, I think, the four parts of the
more effect, I think, the four parts of the
I think there is another position

Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

S E R M O N II.

LUKE X. The latter part of the 25th
Verse.

*Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal
Life?*



IN my former Discourse I ob- SERM.
served to you, that this was II.
the curious *Enquiry* of a Stu-
dent of the *Law* of *Moses*, in
order to try what Answer would be given
to so *important a Question*, by our blessed
Lord, who appeared in the World with the
Character of the *Messiah*, sent by God into
it, to instruct Mankind in the right way to
Happiness; though not received or acknow-
ledged as such by the Person who made this
Enquiry: and that it was our Duty, and
becoming our Professions, who believe in

SERM. *Jesus Christ*, as one sent on so gracious an

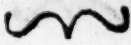
II. Errand, to make the same *Enquiry*, with all
 the serious Sollicitude which a Business of
 so vast importance requires. And, in order
 to proceed successfully in the *Enquiry*,

I. I L A I D down carefully and distinctly
 the great *Question*, as it concerns us of la-
 ter Ages; who are generally educated in
 the Knowledge, and continue long in the
 profession of the *Christian Religion*: viz.
 What are those Terms and Conditions,
 which are required on our Parts; and up-
 on which, God Almighty will, for the sake
 of *Jesus Christ*, and of what he did and suf-
 fered to that End, forgive us our Sins, com-
 mitted during this profession of the *Christi-
 an Religion*, and finally justify or acquit us
 at the great Day, and make us afterwards
 eternally Happy? This, I told you, is the
Enquiry in which we are concerned: which
 it is of infinitely more importance to us to
 regard than any other thing in the World.

2. I U R G E D some Considerations pro-
 per to make us sensible of the great impor-
 tance of this *Enquiry*; and the great hazard
 of being misled, and mistaken in it: and
 this in order to make us truly serious, and
 truly

truly solicitous not to be imposed upon, in SERM.
this grand Affair.

II.

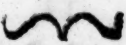
3. I SHEWED you that the only secure 
Method of proceeding, and the only safe
way of coming to a Resolution of this *Ques-*
tion, is to consult the *New Testament* our
selves, in which we have a plain and full
Account of what our blessed Lord himself,
and they who were immediately commissi-
oned by Him, declared concerning this Mat-
ter; and that all other ways and methods
are unsuccessful, and full of Danger. But
I then told you likewise, that, in order to
our arriving at a true account of the im-
portant Question now before us, there were
some other particulars that deserve to be
carefully observed: and though these be in-
deed but so many consequences from the
forementioned Heads; yet, I cannot but
think it very well worth our while distinct-
ly to propose, and consider them. As

I. THAT the *Terms of Salvation*, and
Acceptance with *God*, are what He hath
made them; and of so inflexible a Nature,
that it is not in our Power to bend, or al-
ter them, as we please, into what Shape,
or Nature, we think fit. And this is plain:

S E R M. because it did not belong to us to contrive

II. or frame them ; but to the Supreme Lord
of all things. It is *He*, to whom it belongs
to propose a method of Reconciliation to
his Creatures ; and *He* alone, whose Office
it is to fix the Conditions of this Reconcili-
ation: because He alone knows what is in
all respects fitting, and agreeable to the eter-
nal Laws of Reason, and Wisdom; of which
we our selves could not be proper and im-
partial Judges. *He* hath, by Virtue of his
Wisdom, Goodness, and Power, an un-
doubted Right to give us new Laws ; and
to lay upon us the Conditions of a *Second*
Covenant, as well as of a *First*: But we
have no Right, either from Wisdom, or
Power, to give Laws to Him ; or to fix the
Terms proper for him to accept.

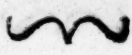
I F therefore he hath offered any particu-
lar Terms and Conditions, upon which he
will accept us ; if He hath sent his *Son*,
and his *Apostles* to lay open these *Terms*:
here we must rest, and remember that it is
not our Business to attempt any alteration
of these *Terms*; and that it is the most fruit-
less as well as arrogant Imagination to
think of doing it. In vain doth any Mor-

tal wish or desire them to be other than SERM.
 what they are determin'd to be in his Will: II.
 and in vain will it be for the greatest or 
 wisest of us all to attempt to accommodate
 and bend them to our *Schemes*, or our In-
 clinations. The *System* of *Christianity* was
 long ago fram'd, and the *Scheme* of Salva-
 tion laid, in the Breast of the Almighty, as
 it was design'd in Time to appear: and this
System hath long ago been written by the
Evangelists and *Apostles*; and this *Scheme*
 hath long ago been propos'd in the *New*
Testament, for the Benefit of all who are
 in a Frame and Disposition of Mind capable
 of receiving Benefit. God hath there shewn
 us, which is the Way to the Salvation He
 promiseth. If, therefore, we will arrive at
 his Salvation; it must be in the Path which
 he hath mark'd out: and we must, indeed,
 either not think of going to Heaven; or we
 must go to it, in *his* Way, and not in our
 own.

IT is necessary to observe this, because
 the Generality of *professed Christians*, tho'
 they have Desire enough of being happy
 hereafter; yet it must be in their own Way:
 and they will not depart from their own
 Schemes,

SERM. Schemes, and their own Wishes. Nay,

II. they seem to think it much more fit that
~~~~~ God Almighty should come down to *their*  
Terms, than that themselves should go up  
to *his*. The Young Man, in the Gospel,  
was *not far from the Kingdom of God*, as  
our Lord thought: because he came to Him  
with some Disposition, and some Desire af-  
ter Happiness. He was willing enough to  
be his Disciple, and to be saved by him;  
if the *Terms* of his Discipleship and Salva-  
tion should appear such as he could com-  
ply with. But when he found that the *Cir-  
cumstances* of his professing the *Gospel* at  
that Time were such, that he must divest  
himself of his large Possessions; and follow  
our Lord with an entire Dependance upon  
him for the common Necessaries of Life;  
and share in common with him the Wants  
and Necessities to which he exposed him-  
self: he went away sorrowful; griev'd to  
hear that he could not be made happy by  
Him at less expence, and that the Terms of  
his Salvation were so uneasy to be comply'd  
with. Thus it is with many *Professors* of  
*Christianity* in later Ages. They are, in  
this Sense, *not far from the Kingdom of*  
God,

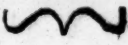
God, that they desire the Happiness of Chri- SERM.  
 stians, and of such as belong to that King- II.  
 dom: but then they are sorrowful to hear   
 of the Terms plainly required; if they don't  
 suit their present Inclinations, and Designs.  
 And so they either depart from our Lord;  
 and give up all Pretences to his Favour, and  
 his Salvation: or else they lay hold of one  
 Pretext or other, or alter those *Terms*; and  
 amuse themselves with some sort of pre-  
 sent *Peace* and Tranquillity, by making  
 them consist and comply with their own  
 Desires and Wishes. Let this therefore be  
 always remembered, that our Fancies, or  
 Tempers, or Desires, cannot make the  
*Terms* of our *Acceptance* other than what  
 they are already; fix'd and determin'd by  
 the *Father* of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, with  
 whom there is no *Variableness*, nor *shadow*  
*of turning*: who, after having view'd all  
 Things relating to our Nature, and his own  
 upon the Principles of unerring Wisdom,  
 appointed the Bounds of his own Mercy,  
 and the Conditions of our Happiness; nei-  
 ther of which it is in our Power either to  
 enlarge or diminish.

N O R



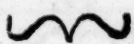
SERM. NOR is it any other than egregious Fol-

II. ly for us to imagine that He himself will  
 at last vary from his own Terms; and, after He hath declared and promulgated Rules, by which he assures us He will be govern'd in the Distribution of his Love and Favour, to flatter ourselves that he will depart from these Rules, for *our Sakes*, who would not depart from our own unreasonable Practices either for *his Sake*, or *our own*; and that he will adapt his Proceedings at last to *our Practice*, in Pity to *us*, who would not adapt our Practice to *his Laws*. And yet I know of but this one Way in which any Alteration or Abatement, or *new Modification*, of the *Covenant of Grace* can be hop'd for; *viz.* that God himself will at last new model it, and alter it into some other Form: The Weakness of which Imagination I shall have occasion hereafter more fully to lay open. At present I make this Observation, that the *Terms of Acceptance* are establish'd and unalterable; as God himself hath fixed them in the Gospel: because, unless we be perswaded of this, all our *Enquiries* after them will be only so many Speculations, and fruitless Searches; rather  
 serving

serving to satisfy Curiosity, than to direct SERM.  
 Practice. For if we entertain a Thought, II.  
 that those *Terms*, tho' solemnly settled, and   
 solemnly promulgated, by the Son of God  
 and his Apostles, may be again altered, and  
 changed into something more agreeable to  
 us, and more consistent with our Ways?  
 the *Gospel* can have but little, very little,  
 effect upon our Minds, under the power-  
 ful Assaults of any considerable Tempta-  
 tion. Pleasure, Honour, and Profit, will  
 work strongly upon a Mind fluctuating in  
 uncertainty about the Consequences of  
 things; or made unstable by the flattering  
 Hope that the Consequences at last may not  
 be found so terrible as they are represented  
 in the Gospel. But if we be possess'd before-  
 hand that *such* are the *Terms* of *Accept-*  
*tance*, as the plain Declarations of the *New*  
*Testament* make them; and that *such* they  
 will be found at last: then our serious En-  
 quiries after them will have a great and  
 powerful Influence upon our Conduct; and  
 be of more force than the Efforts of Flesh  
 and Blood, or the Insinuations of this tran-  
 sitory World. But,

SERM. 2. ANOTHER very *necessary Rule* to be  
II. observed in this important *Enquiry*, is, that  
all preconceived Notions of our own; all  
the Impressions of Education; all the Inclinations of Sense; all the Influences of Temporal Interest, and every thing that may cast a Cloud before our Eyes, or prevent our seeing or receiving the Truth, must be disregarded, in comparison of any one plain Declaration of the *New Testament* upon this Head. This is so necessary, that it is in vain to search after any Truth; unless all Prejudices, and evil Habits of Thinking, or Acting, inconsistent with it, be laid aside, and for the present disregarded. And much more necessary is it in this most *Important Enquiry*, that our Minds should lay aside *every weight* which will incline them against Truth, and weigh up the contrary Balance in which that inestimable Jewel is tryed; that we should be perfectly willing to find that *True*, which is *True*, whether we find it or no; that we should be as free as possible from the Bias impress'd upon the Soul, by former Schemes received upon the Authority of others, or by Evil Habits built upon our own Sin and Folly;



Folly ; that we should go to those Books in S E R M.  
 which the Account of this is laid before us, II.  
 with Hearts disposed to Truth ; and indif-   
 ferent whether this Account shall be found  
 to contradict our former Notions, and Pra-  
 ctices, or not.

THE force of Passion, and Prejudice, a-  
 gainst *Truth* is so great, that Men tolerably  
 well skill'd in that sort of Learning, may  
 sometimes be hindred from seeing even the  
 plain Truth of a *Mathematical Demonstra-*  
*tion*, by some private Resentment, and se-  
 cret Pique against others : in which Science  
 there is no complaint of indeterminate Ideas,  
 or obscure Expression. In like manner, set  
 a Man about the Enquiry we are now speak-  
 ing of, who hath been used to a way of  
 thinking at second hand ; and is in love  
 with the Notions received from others, tho'  
 never so false : his Labours shall be found  
 to tend to little, unless it be to strain the ob-  
 scure Passages into a Sense agreeable to his  
 own Notions : whilst the plain ones are neg-  
 lected. Or, set a Man about this Enquiry,  
 immersed in this World ; embarrass'd with  
 a sordid love of Gain, or Honour ; or cap-  
 tivated by Lust, and sensual Pleasure : and  
 how

SERM. how hardly will He, if at all, receive any

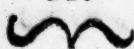
II. thing, as the Will of God, inconsistent with  
 his present Views? What a Bias will his own Wishes, and his perverted Will, clap upon his understanding? and how many Ways will He find, if He have any Thoughts of Religion at all, to reconcile the plainest contrary Declarations of God's Will to his own State, and his own Hopes? This makes me say that, if we would make the *Enquiry* with Success, we must be willing to find that true which is so; and that we must renounce to all our own Wishes, or Hopes, or Desires, whether founded upon former *Notions* infused into us by others; or upon former *Practices* indulged by ourselves.

NAY, how weak; how unreasonable; how injurious and pernicious a thing is it to be otherwise disposed? For *we* make not *Truth*: but it is what it is, and what it ever will be, whether we receive it, or not; and, when plainly propos'd to us, it is our Condemnation, if we reject it, or prefer any thing before it. And if we have been engag'd in such a Habit of Sin as may incline us to one side more than another: the farther we go in this Way, by establishing this  
*Habit*

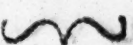
*Habit of Evil Practice* by an *Error* fixed SERM.  
in the *Understanding*, we are so much the II.  
more deeply engaged in a Course of Ruin;   
and so much the more irrecoverably lost.  
For by this means we go not in the Dark;  
but do as it were light and direct ourselves  
all along the Paths of Misery. We go se-  
curely perhaps for the present, but at last  
the Sight and Sense of our wilful Error  
will be the most painful Horror, and in-  
supportable Burthen. This should engage  
Sinners, that have any Thoughts of finding  
Mercy, to break off their *evil Habits*: be-  
cause the longer they proceed in them, the  
more effectually will they blind their Eyes,  
and the more certainly will they indispose  
them, either to see the Truth of God's Co-  
venant, tho' written in never so plain Cha-  
racters; or to receive it to any purpose, if  
they should not avoid the seeing it. For  
nothing unqualifies Men for *Divine Truths*,  
of Importance to Happiness, so much as the  
*Habit of Sin*: nothing makes Men more  
afraid of, or unfit for, the *Light*, than their  
having exercised themselves in the *Works of*  
*Darkness*.



SERM.

II.  


3. ANOTHER Particular I must mention, of great use in this Enquiry, is, that we must take *all* the Declarations of the New Testament upon this Head, into the Account ; and not *some* only : and then that, if there be any seeming Variety in any of them ; the more obscure must be interpreted so as to be agreeable to the most plain and repeated Declarations. This it is but reasonable to require : because neither our Saviour nor his Apostles, have in any one single Portion of the *New Testament*, laid down the several Branches of the *New Covenant* ; but spoken of them, as distinct Occasions gave them Ground to do : sometimes of one, sometimes of another. Now all things, equally declar'd by Them to be *Conditions* of our pardon, or salvation, are with equal Willingness, and equal Regard, to be received by us. And this Rule will prevent all those Mistakes in us, which others have fatally run into, by attending to some single Declarations upon this Subject ; to the Neglect and Contradiction of others, perhaps more plain and intelligible. This will teach us that, if one Place of Scripture attributes Happiness to  
one

one *Virtue*, or one *Act* of the Mind; and S E R M.  
 another as plainly to another; and a third II.  
 to a third: and a fourth to the Performance   
 of the whole Will of God, without men-  
 tioning Particulars: I say, This will teach  
 us not to overlook one Passage for the sake  
 of another, not more plain, or more intel-  
 ligible; when *all* have the same Stamp of  
 Divine Authority; and when, without re-  
 garding *all*, we cannot pretend to know  
 the whole of what Almighty God hath de-  
 clared concerning this Affair. The acting  
 contrary to this, is just as if the *rebellious*  
*Subjects* of a *Prince*, now to be restored to  
 his Favour upon such and such *Conditions*,  
 should attend only to one or two of these  
*Conditions*; and pass over all the rest, as  
 if they were not of equal Importance, and  
 had not the Sanction of the same Autho-  
 rity.

A N D then, supposing there should be  
 some *Obscurity* in one or more Passages rela-  
 ting to this Affair; there can be no Danger  
 to Us, but in pretending to understand these,  
 and at the same time understanding them  
 so, as to invalidate the Design of the more  
 plain and express Declarations: and this out

SER M. of a Desire to reconcile our own Practices to  
 II. the Hopes of Happiness. For it is no Crime  
 ~~~~~ in any Christian, not to understand an ob-  
 scure or dubious Passage; provided he hath
 nothing wilful to accuse himself of, in this
 want of Understanding: But the Crime is,
 to resolve to understand it in such a Sense,
 as may best consist with his false Hopes; tho'
 it consists not at all with those plainer Texts,
 about the Meaning of which there can be
 no Doubt.

LET us, therefore, but take into the
 Account the *Whole* of what is, in several
 Places of the *New Testament*, made ne-
 cessary to our obtaining God's Favour, and
 Eternal Happiness. And, if we meet with
 any thing which we do not perfectly un-
 derstand upon this Head, let us but attend
 to the plain and repeated Declarations;
 and not presume to neglect *them* for the
 sake of those which are not so; or to in-
 terpret those which are not so, after such a
manner as to *contradict* those which are so:
 and I dare say, we need not fear any Error in
 this great Enquiry. For the Terms absolute-
 ly required are plainly, and frequently, ex-
 pressed: and what is so, is, in every sort of
 Writing,

Writing, allowed to explain what is not so: SERM.
 but what is not so is never allowed to be II.
 interpreted so as to contradict what is so. ~~~~~
 And therefore it will be unjustifiable and
 inexcusable in any one, to lay hold on any
 part of the *New Testament*, or any *Text*
 in it, which is in any respect obscure; and
 to oppose this to the plainest and most re-
 peated: in order to build a *Doctrine*, or a
Scheme, upon it, not to be reconciled to
these; or perhaps absolutely inconsistent
 with them. This is not to consult the Ho-
 nour of God: nor is it the way to find out
 the *Terms* of our own Happiness.

THESE *Rules*, and *Observations*, which
 I have now laid down, are in order to your
 careful and exact Examination of what I
 design to say, when I come to lay before
 you the *Terms* of our *Acceptance* and *Sal-*
vation, as they appear to me in the *New*
Testament: to which I cannot now pro-
 ceed for want of Time; but before which,
 it was necessary to commend to your
 Thoughts the *Considerations* before-menti-
 oned; which will, I hope, be of great use
 in all your *future Enquiries* after the Way
 to *Eternal Life*. And all but little e-

SERM. nough, or rather, I fear, too little, to make

II. the Generality of Christians as sincere in
 ~~~~~ their Enquiries, and as ready to embrace the  
 true Answer to them, as they ought to  
 be.

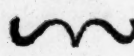
AND indeed I have mentioned, and insisted upon, all these Precautions; because it is *Eternal Life* we are enquiring after; and the Favour of that God, whose Favour is better than Life, and whose Displeasure is infinitely worse than Death. Were they the Concerns of this Life, that fleeth away like a Shadow, and is not to be stopp'd by all the Art, or all the Power of Man, about which we are enquiring; it would be of no such vast Importance to be solicitous about the Matter. Let *Passion*, or *Pride*, or *Covetousness* direct us; Let *Ambition*, or *Lust*, blind our Eyes; an End would quickly come, when this World could have no part in us. But yet, behold the Perverseness of Mankind. Were the *Enquiry* after the Pleasures, or Riches, or Honours, of this World; had there any Person of great Sagacity, or uncommon Penetration, appeared in it, to direct them in the sure way to these Riches, or Pleasures, or Honours, that must end with  
 this

this Temporal Life : how few Mistakes S E R M.  
 should we find made even by the weakest II.  
 of Men? The *Covetous* would easily under-  
 stand, and make themselves perfect Masters  
 of the Way to Wealth ; the *Voluptuous*  
 would never miss the Path of Pleasure ; nor  
 the *Ambitious*, the Road to Preferment, and  
 Honour, and Titles. None of *them* would  
 trust any Direction at second hand, when  
 they could consult the Oracle it self. None  
 of *them* would be diverted from their Enqui-  
 ry by any Impulse contrary to that by which  
 they professed to be directed. None of *them*  
 would hazard the Disappointment of their  
 main end, by relying on any thing but what  
 was plainly proposed by their Guide. And  
 all of them would be Proof against every  
 Attempt that could be used, either to de-  
 ceive their Understandings, or to influence  
 their Wills to contrary Ways.

BUT let it not always be said, that the  
*Children of this World are wiser, in their*  
*Generation ; wiser in their Pursuits and En-*  
*quiries after Trifles and Misery and Ruin ;*  
*less capable of being imposed upon ; more*  
*guarded and secure in their Way, than the*  
*Children of Light, who profess to have*



S E R M. nobler Things in View ; a State of unchange-

II.  able Happiness, Eternal in the Heavens, after this poor, uncertain State is at an End. If we be the *Children of Light* ; if we have *Eternal Life* truly in View, and be truly inquisitive after the Way that leads to it ; let us consider what *Eternal Life* is ; how much it outweighs all that *this Life* can offer us ; how much it exceeds all our present Conceptions which are formed upon very imperfect Ideas ; how vastly it will recompense all the Pains, and Care, and Caution of the strictest Enquirer ; how unconceivable an Happiness must be contained in the Favour of God, the Supreme and Original Father of all Things : and we shall think no Precaution too much to secure us from Mistake, whilst we are seeking our Way to it ; no Care superfluous to defend us from the great Enemies of this *Enquiry* ; no Pains, or Study, too great on our Parts, in order to be fully satisfied, *What we must do to inherit Eternal Life.*

To the Resolution of which grand *Question* I design to proceed the next Opportunity.

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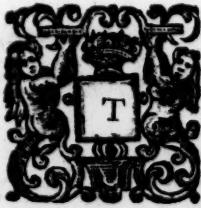
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*Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.*

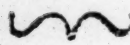
# S E R M O N III.

LUKE X. The latter part of the 25th  
Verse.

*Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal  
Life?*

 HE *Enquiry* which I told you, S E R M.  
these Words gave me Occasion III.  
to propose, as of Importance to  
Persons educated, and continuing, in the Profession of the Faith of Christ, (in which Number, we, and all of later Ages, generally are) is this: What it is that the *Gospel* requires of Men, who believe in *Jesus Christ*, and have been baptized into his Religion, and acknowledge Him for their Master, in order to their Acquittance from any Sins they have at any time been wilfully guilty of, during their  
*Christian*

SERM. *Christian Profession*; and to their final Justi-

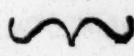
III.  fication at the Day of Judgment; and to their Eternal Happiness after this. And, having in two several Discourses endeavoured to engage your Attention, and to raise your Sollicitude after Truth, in a matter of such unspeakable Moment; as well as to point out to you the true Method of your coming to a well-grounded Satisfaction, (*viz* your examining whatsoever is at any time laid before you on this Head by all the plain, and intelligible Texts in the *New Testament* concerning it, carefully laid together, and sincerely compared :) I come now to a particular Resolution of the *Question* proposed, which I think may be comprized under the four following Heads.

I. IT is required of a *Christian*, who hath been a *wilful Sinner*, that he renounce, and forsake, his Sins.

II. IT is required of him, that he sincerely and with Perseverance, practise the contrary Virtues. And tho' to *these Two* all other Terms may be reduced; yet it is very proper particularly to mention two more, *viz*.

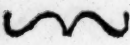
III. IT is not sufficient that the Sinner forsake the Sins of which he stands guilty before



fore God, and amend his outward Life; but SER M.  
 he must entirely forgive the Offences, and III.  
 Trespases, of others against himself: which   
 is so necessary a Condition, that without it  
 even those Sins which he hath forsaken shall  
 never be forgiven him.

IV. IN the *Case of Injustice, or Fraud,*  
 or *Oppression*; it is required of the Sinner,  
 if he ever hope for Pardon, and Acceptance,  
 not only that he leave off Injustice for the  
 future, and act justly, and honestly; (which  
 alone is not sufficient;) but also that he make  
*Restitution*, in whatsoever Instances, he  
 hath by any ways or means, injured any one  
 in the World.

THESE are the *four* particular *Terms,*  
 or *Conditions*, upon which *Christians*, who  
 have been *wilful Sinners*, may hope for  
 Acceptance; and without which the *Gospel*  
 gives them not the least Ground for such  
 Hope. They may be all comprized in one  
*general Proposition, viz.* That it is required  
 of *Christians*, who have the Guilt of any  
 Sins upon them, to endeavour heartily, and  
 sincerely, for the future, to practise the whole  
 Will of God, revealed in the Book of *Na-*  
*ture*, and the *Gospel of Jesus Christ*: and  
 that

SERM. that without this honest, sincere, and universal Obedience, they cannot hope to be  
 III.  accepted, for the Sake, and upon the *Terms*, of *Jesus Christ*. But it is fit to be more particular; and therefore I have chosen to speak of this Matter under the *forementioned Heads*: every one of which I design distinctly to consider, *first*, shewing that they are most plainly required; and *then*, shewing the Fitness and Reasonableness of them. And after we are fully satisfied concerning these, they will be so many infallible Directions to us; and prevent all fatal Mistakes, which otherwise may be occasioned by a too great Readiness to lay hold on any obscure, or misinterpreted, Passage of Scripture, for the Support of any other Notions concerning this important Matter.

THESE are the *Points*, I say, which I design particularly to handle. But the *Enquiry* now before us, relating, as you see, to the *Case* of such *professed Christians* as have been *wilful Sinners*, and so have need of other Conditions to be offered them, than that of a perfect and unspotted Holiness; it will not be an useless, or improper Digression, before I come to the particular  
 handling

handling of the Points now laid down, to SERM.  
 consider, *who they are that may be called* III.  
*wilful Sinners*; and the several *Sorts*, and   
*Degrees* of such as are so: that so, we may  
 be all sensible that the very best of us may  
 have need of some or other of these *Terms*  
 of *Condescension* offered us thro' *Jesus Christ*,  
 and, for his Sake only, made *Terms* of *Ac-*  
*ceptance* with God. And here, it being  
 manifest that all Those may justly be called  
*wilful Sinners*, who sin, either *first*, against  
 sufficient Light; or *secondly*, against the  
 Dictates of their own Consciences to the  
 contrary: it will be proper to shew *who* they  
 are that may be said thus to sin, either a-  
 gainst the *one*, or the other. Now,

I. ALL those may be said to act against  
 sufficient Light, and sufficient Evidence to  
 the contrary, who have fair Opportunities  
 and Abilities of knowing their Duty; who  
 profess a Religion, and live in any particu-  
 lar Place, or at any particular Time, in which  
 their Duty is laid plainly before them. And  
 here I must remark that not only those *Sin-*  
*ners* who have attended to this Evidence;  
 and been sensible of the Directions of this  
 Light, may be said to sin against it; but  
 such



SER M. such also, as have wilfully refused to give

III. any *Attention* to it, and have rejected the  
 offers of its Direction, may equally be said  
 to sin against it; because they wilfully refuse  
 to pay any Respect, or Attention to it: and  
 not only upon this account; but because  
 they act against the Maxims which *that* is  
 perpetually offering to their View, and which  
 they might, if they pleased, be very well  
 acquainted with. For no *Ignorance* that is  
 wilful, and affected; or that proceeds from  
 a Resolution to guard against better Informa-  
 tion, and is founded upon an ill-disposed  
 Mind; can avail a Sinner any thing, or di-  
 stinguish him at all from the most wilful of  
 Sinners. And this ought to be remarked,  
 because many Persons seem to be so weak, as  
 to chuse voluntarily not to be better in-  
 form'd, because they are pretty well resolved  
 not to alter their bad Courses; and then to  
 imagine that their *Ignorance* will be a sort  
 of an Excuse for their Vices. Whereas this  
 sort of *Ignorance* gives the Man all the *Es-  
 sence*, and *Guilt*, of a *wilful Sinner*; nay,  
 and makes Him a Sinner against that very  
 Light and Evidence, to which he wilfully  
 refuseth to attend. So that, with respect

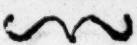
to persons who have professed to believe in *Jesus Christ*, and to receive Him for their Master, (of whom we are now particularly speaking) it may be affirmed that, not only *They* sin against the Light of his *Gospel*, who, at the very time of their committing Sin, know, and are sensible, that the Action they are going about is condemned by his *Gospel*; but also *They* who, after having professed Faith in Him, are wilfully careless and negligent in their enquiries after his Will; and chuse, upon very bad Principles, rather not to know, than to know, the Rules which He hath laith down. For this, I say, is manifestly sinning against the *Light* of that *Gospel*, which they wilfully refuse to consult, or attend to, upon a Suspicion that it may disturb them in their present Course; and consequently, upon a Resolution of continuing in it without that Disturbance.

THESE Two sorts of Christians therefore are *wilful Sinners*: such, as sin against the *Rules* of the *Gospel*, knowing that they condemn their Practice at the very time of their sinning; and such likewise, as sin against those same Rules, with an *Ignorance* which proceeds

SERM. proceeds from a perverse and deliberate Desire of being undisturbed in their Course: an

III. Ignorance, in which they wilfully entrench themselves, as some sort of Security against the Guilt of Sin; but which, in truth, is as great an Aggravation of it, as can well be imagined. The Difference between these *Two*, is only such a Difference as may be supposed between Two disobedient Sons of the same Father: the *one* of which listens to his Will, and hears his Commands, and afterwards transgresseth them; and the *other*, whenever his Father is going to declare his Will to Him, stops his Ears, and refuseth to hear his Voice, merely because he is resolved to go on in his own Way, without any Regard to his Will. And which of these Two is the most criminal, it is hard to determine: only that there seems more Resolution of Disobedience in the *latter*. Such Persons as I have been now describing, must not expect to be reckoned by our Saviour amongst those Servants *who know not their Master's Will, and so shall be beaten with fewer stripes* than others: for the *Servants* meant in that Saying of our *Lord's*, are such as have not the Opportunity of knowing their Master's Will



Will so fully as others have; not such as SERM.  
have the Opportunity, and wilfully refuse to III.  
make use of it. 

2. As there are *Two sorts* of *Sinners*, who may be said to sin against *sufficient Light*: so likewise, there are *Two sorts* of *Sinners*, who may be said to sin against their own Judgments and Consciences; and consequently, to be *wilful Sinners*. First, such as, at the very time of their sinning, perceive within themselves something which forbids that Action, and represents the Unreasonableness of it, and the Anger of God consequent upon it: and secondly, such as, tho' they have by a Custom of sinning worn off all sense of their Duty so far as to sin without any present Disturbance, and Uneasiness of Mind, at the very time of sinning; yet, before this habitual Practice of Vice, have often owned and acknowledged, or, during the continuance of it, do, upon many Occasions, and in their most serious Intervals, judge and determine that the contrary Course of Action is truly their Duty, and what alone can entitle them to the Favour of God. Concerning the former of these, no one will doubt but that they sin against  
E their

*Concerning the Terms*

SERM. their Consciences : because they are warned, and made uneasy, by them at the very time of sinning. And, as to the latter, I think it equally certain that they likewise do the same. For they sin against that Judgment which they have heretofore often made, before an Habit of Sin had made them insensible; they sin against their own Determinations in their most serious moments; they sin against a former Judgment of their Minds, which their Reason and Consideration hath never yet reversed, or ever determined to be false or groundless; they sin against that which was the Voice of their Conscience, when they had any awake in their Minds: and consequently, They may be truly said to sin against their Judgments, and Consciences; tho', at the very time of their sinning, they have no present Alarm and Disturbance from them.

ALL the Difference between the *Two sorts of Sinners* I have now mentioned, is the same that may be supposed between *Two* Servants of the same Master: the *One* of which having not shewn his Disobedience so often, the Master still attends upon him, and directs him in his Actions, hoping to keep him,

him, by this means, from all bad and pernicious Practices, which nevertheless he sometimes ventures upon, even under his Master's Eye; and the *Other* having shewn the same Disobedience, under his Master's immediate Direction, more frequently, the Master thinks it useless any longer to attend upon Him, or to warn him against any particular Action. But yet, this Servant, tho' He offends not against his Master's present express Warning to the contrary; He wilfully offends against all his past Rules, and all those Directions which He hath heretofore given him. So that his Case is worse than that of the *Former*, in this, that the *Former* hath not sinned beyond the Patience of his Master: or so as to forfeit his constant Attendance upon him: which *He* hath done; and still persists in that Disobedience. Just thus it is with the *Two sorts* of Sinners now mentioned. Before an Habit of Sin hath made it otherwise; the Man hath generally the Remonstrances of his Conscience, whilst He is thinking to venture upon any Vice. But Conscience may at last be supposed to be weary of that good Office; and to find it fruitless to give so particular an Attendance



SERM. upon the Sinner. Yet the Sinner neverthe-

III. less sins against it, because He continues to  
 ~~~~~ sin against all it's former Remonstrances ;  
 against that Judgment and Determination
 which He himself hath formerly acknow-
 ledged to be just and reasonable ; and which
 He cannot think, or prove to be otherwise,
 even in the Heighth of his Wickedness. So
 that it is manifest that *He* sins against his
 own Judgment and Conscience, whose Con-
 science hath heretofore sufficiently warned
 Him against the Course He pursues, and suf-
 ficiently recommended the contrary to Him ;
 as well as *He* whose Conscience still con-
 tinues to do that good Office : and conse-
 quently, that both have equally the Guilt of
wilful Sinners.

THOSE professed Christians, therefore,
 who do, in any single Action, or in any
 Course of Actions, transgress those Rules
 which they know to be laid down in the *Gos-
 pel* ; and they also, who wilfully refuse to
 know those Rules, merely that they may the
 more quietly practise what themselves think
 fit ; Both *wilfully* act against sufficient *Light*,
 and *Evidence* : and therefore are both cer-
 tainly *wilful Sinners.* So likewise, they
 who

who do, either in any particular Action, or in any Course of Actions, sin against the present Checks and Warnings of their own Consciences; and they also, who sin against the past Determination of their own Judgments, and the serious Result of their own best Reason, tho' wholly unmindful of it just at the time of *sinning*; both *wilfully* sin against their Consciences: and therefore are both certainly *wilful Sinners*. And now, from what has been said upon this Subject, it will not be improper to observe more particularly the several *Degrees*, and *Ranks*, of those who may justly be stiled *wilful Sinners*. As

I. IT is plain that in the lowest degree of *wilful Sinners* are such Persons as have a sincere Desire of avoiding all Sin; such as keep up in their Minds a warm Sense of the Guilt of it; and do, in the main Tenour of their Lives, demonstrate the Sincerity of their outward Profession of *Christianity*, by observing its Laws, behaving themselves according to its Rules, and resisting great and frequent Temptations to sin: but nevertheless are sometimes, through the Violence of some particular Temptations, hurried into such a Behaviour, and such Actions, as they know to

SERM. be condemned by the *Gospel* they profess,

III. and to be displeasing to *Almighty God*. But

~ in this State they do not continue, or glory; but lament and abhor their Condition; and by Amendment raise themselves as soon as possible from it. These are *wilful Sinners*, in this particular Behaviour: because they do the thing which their *Consciences* condemn; and because they wilfully act in this Particular, against the Light of that *Gospel* which they enjoy. But it is hard to call such Persons by the Name justly bestowed upon those whose main Course of Living is directed and governed by a quite contrary Principle. For as *they* are not denominated *good* and *virtuous*, from one or two particular *good* and *virtuous* Actions; whilst the greatest part of their Lives is filled up with the contrary Practices: so neither can the *others* justly be denominated *wicked Men*, from one or two particular Commissions of Sin, whilst the main of their Lives hath been dedicated to *Virtue*; provided that, by their Amendment in those particular Instances, they have given sufficient Proof of their Repentance. But what I observe at present is this, that such Persons, are in these Actions, *wilful Sinners*,

Sinners, for the Reasons before given; and SERM.
that they certainly stand in need of an *Act* III.
of *Grace*, from *Almighty God*, in order to
be assured of Pardon and Forgiveness; be-
cause they have done what they themselves
acknowledge they ought not to have done;
and have wilfully committed what deserveth
Punishment: what they cannot justify, but
are forced to condemn themselves for.

2. In the next Degree of *wilful Sinners*,
may be placed such Persons as have some
Sense of Religion, and some sort of Reso-
lution of practising the Duties of it: but yet,
when any considerable Temptation offers it
self, yield up themselves to the power of it;
and at that time, when only they can ex-
perience the Sincerity of their own Minds,
viz. in the Day of *Trial*, do very often wil-
fully fall into grievous and deliberate Sins.
I do not suppose these Persons to be so bad
as to seek out Opportunities of sinning; or
to harbour in their Minds before-hand any
Designs of laying hold on such Opportuni-
ties; but thro' some great Defect, or Neg-
ligence in themselves, to be surpriz'd, by al-
most every Trial, into Sin; and to give them-
selves Proofs of little, thro' their whole Be-
haviour,

SERM. haviour, besides the Weakness of their own

III. Resolutions, and the ineffectual Sense they
 ~~~~~ have of the Truths of Religion. Of *those*, mentioned under the foregoing *Head*, it may be said that they are sincere, and settled in the Ground-work of Religion; because they resist many Temptations, and govern the main part of their Lives by the Rules of it: but of *these*, I fear, it can hardly be said that they do both truly understand, and heartily believe, the Nature, and Importance of what they profess; because whenever any considerable Trial offers itself, (which alone can prove whether a Man deceiveth himself in this Matter, or not,) they find no Strength, no Assistance, in those Principles which they suppose or profess themselves to have; but always renounce them for the sake of some present Profit or Pleasure in sinning. When none, or very little, Fruit is seen to proceed from the good Seed sown; it is a certain Sign that there is some Fault in the Ground in which it is lodged. But,

3. IN the highest Order of *wilful Sinners*, are to be placed those who are come to such a Pitch in Wickedness, as to contrive and design Evil before-hand; to lay Scenes of  
 Sin;

Sin; and to invite, or seek out, Temptations S E R M.  
and Opportunities for it, with a Resolution III.  
of complying, and yielding to them. I cannot conceive any Degree of *Sinners* beyond this: and it will make but a small Difference in those of this *Order*, that some of them meet with much fewer Opportunities successful to their Wishes than *others* do. For in the Eye of God, and of Natural Justice, *He* hath all the Guilt of Sin, who deliberates and resolves upon the Action, whenever a fair Opportunity shall offer itself to him; and is always prepared for more and more Sins, as more and more Occasions present themselves. That *He* doth not always meet with these Opportunities, may be happy to others: but is no Alteration of his own inward Guilt. For the *Guilt* of Sins lies where the *Wilfulness* of it lies; and that is in the inward Design and deliberate Resolution; the longer Time any Person hath for the deliberating part, enhancing and encreasing the *Wilfulness* of the Action.

THUS, in the Account of the Gospel, *Murthers, Adulteries, Fornications*, and all Sins, are condemned, as in the Heart; and proceeding out of the Heart: *that is*, as designed, and resolved upon, within. In the  
Eye



SERM. Eye of our *Lord*, He is an *Adulterer*, who  
 III. hath deliberately resolved upon the committing  
 ~~~~~ *Adultery*; whether the Opportunity of  
 doing it ever present itself, or not: And so,
He is a Murtherer, that is, *He* hath the
 Guilt of Murther before God, who hath resolved
 and decreed within himself to take away his
 Neighbour's Life unjustly; whether He ever meet
 with a favourable Opportunity, or not.

AND tho' Human Governours cannot reach the Mind, or discover the secret Intention, but by the outward Act; and so cannot reasonably judge of Guilt but by the outward Act: yet there is all the Reason in the World that Almighty God should always judge of Guilt by the inward Act and Design; because it always lies there, and because He knows the inward Act of the mind in it self, much more perfectly than We can know it from any outward, or open Act. Nay, we ourselves never condemn the *outward Action*, but when it appears, at least, to have proceeded from a bad Design within. Who ever blamed a Machine, or Engine, or thought *that* guilty of Murther; because Men's Lives have been taken away by the Violence of it? Or who ever
 thought

thought a Brute guilty, in the Sense in which S E R M.
a reasonable Creature is so, for having been the III.
Occasion of a Man's Death? Nay, who ever
condemned a Man as deserving Punishment,
if, through unavoidable Inadvertence, or de-
signing Good and Kindness, he hath proved
the Instrument of Death to a Person, to
whom he is known to have meant no Evil?
Yet in all these Cases there is the *material*
Action which is in all Murthers; a taking a-
way the Life of a Man: notwithstanding
which, *Guilt* is not supposed to belong to
it, because there wants the Design, the De-
liberation, and the Resolution, knowingly
to do the Action. All this shows plainly
that it is in *these* that the Evil of Sin lies:
and that by these, the Men who have but
few Opportunities of bringing their inward
Resolutions to outward Acts, may be made
equal in Guilt to those who have many
more Opportunities of carrying their design-
ed Wickedness into Action; *that is*, if they
have an equal Number of the same evil De-
signs within, and wicked deliberate Resolu-
tions. We may, indeed, suppose an accidental
Difference in this, that one Man's Heart may
relent and alter, when the Opportunity offers
it

S E R M. it self; and another's may not. But of this

III. God alone can judge: and therefore, to
 ~~~~~ Him alone it belongs to do it. These are  
 all the several *Orders*, and *Degrees*, of  
*wilful Sinners*, which I can think of: and  
 to one or other of these, All that come  
 under that Name may be reduced.

I SHALL only observe farther the Difference between these *Three sorts* of *wilful Sinners*, with respect to the *Habit* of sinning. For though it be impossible to define exactly what Number of *wilful Sins* shall constitute an *habitual Sinner*; as it is, in any Case, what particular Number of Actions are necessary to constitute an *Habit*, or *Custom*: yet it is manifest that the *first sort* of Sinners cannot be called *habitual Sinners*, because the main Tenour of their Lives is governed by the Moral Rules of the *Gospel*; and it is only in some few particular Instances of Temptation that they have been overcome, and transported from the general Bent and Bias of their Lives, in the Course of which they have triumphed over many more of the same sort of Trials, and Difficulties. It is manifest, in the next place,  
 that



that the two other sorts of *wilful Sinners* S E R M.  
 may justly be called *habitual*: because even III.  
 the better sort of them give themselves up  
 to the Power of all considerable Temptati-  
 ons; suffering themselves to be carried by  
 them into Sin; and much more frequently  
 yielding to the Strength of the Trials they  
 meet with, than using all the Force of their  
 Souls to resist and overcome them. But  
 with this remarkable Difference, that the  
*one* of them do not design or resolve upon  
 Sin before-hand; or please themselves with  
 the Thought and Deliberation concerning  
 it: whereas the *other* sort have given up  
 themselves to contrive their own Sins; to  
 be their own Tempters, and to yield to their  
 own Temptations.

BUT though there be this very great  
 Difference between these *Three sorts* of  
*wilful Sinners*; yet they agree in this,  
 that they have all, (the lowest as well  
 as the highest Degree of them,) done what  
 they ought not to have done; that they may  
 all justly fear a Punishment from God, pro-  
 portionable to their several Estates; that  
 they all stand in need of an *Act* of *Grace*,  
 and Favour, from the great Judge of the  
 World;

SERM. World; of *Terms* of *Condescension*, below  
III. those of exact and rigorous Justice: in order  
to their Reconciliation with an offended  
God; and to a well-grounded Peace, and  
Satisfaction within themselves.

THE *Terms* of which *Reconciliation*  
and Favour, I laid down at the beginning  
of this Discourse: and shall distinctly prosecute,  
one after another, in my following  
Sermons.



*Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.*

# S E R M O N IV.

LUKE X. The latter part of the 25th  
Verse.

*Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal  
Life?*



THE Enquiry we are now upon, S E R M.  
IV.  
is this, What it is that the  
*Gospel* requires of Men, who  
believe in *Jesus Christ*, and  
have been baptized into his  
Religion, and acknowledge him for their  
Master, in order to their Acquittance from  
any Sins which they have at any Time been  
wilfully guilty of, during their Christian  
Profession; and to their final Justification at  
the Day of Judgment; and to their Eternal  
Happiness after this. The *Answer* to this  
*Enquiry*, in my last Discourse, I laid down  
in *four Particulars*. And I observed to  
you,



S E R M. you, that all *four* might be comprized in this  
 IV. one *general Proposition*, viz. That it is re-  
 quired of *Christians* who have been *wilful Sinners*, sincerely to endeavour for the fu-  
 ture to practise the whole Will of God, any  
 ways made known to them, and that with-  
 out this Amendment, and sincere, universal  
 Obedience, the Gospel gives them no  
 Ground for Hopes of Pardon and Accept-  
 ance, and Eternal Life : but that it would  
 be more useful to discourse upon this Sub-  
 ject, under the fore-mentioned Particulars.  
 In order likewise to our knowing our own  
 Condition, and the need we all have of some  
 or other of these *Terms*, offered to such as  
 have been *wilful Sinners*, I laid before you  
 an Account of the Nature of *wilful Sin* ;  
 what it is that makes a Man a *wilful Sinner* ;  
 and what are the several Differences, and  
 Degrees, of such as are *wilful Sinners*. And  
 after having done this ; I now come distinct-  
 ly to consider, in their Order, every one of  
 the four Propositions, laid down in my last  
 Discourse : and this, *first*, with respect to  
 their *Truth* ; and *secondly*, with regard to  
 their Fitness, and Reasonableness. The *first*  
*Proposition* is this :

I. It

I. IT is required, in the Gospel-Dispensation, of every Christian, who hath been in any sort, or any degree, a wilful Sinner, that He renounce, and forsake his Sins. SERM. IV.

I. THE Truth of this will plainly appear from the following Proofs. In general, *The Grace of God*, i. e. his Mercy in the Gospel is declared by St. Paul, *Titus* ii. 12, 13. to have appeared unto all Men, teaching them to deny Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts; i. e. to renounce and have no Communication with them for the future. And at ver. 14. Christ is said to have given himself for us Christians, that he might first redeem us from all Iniquity; in order to redeem us at last from the Punishment of it. It is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners, saith the same Apostle, *1 Tim.* i. 15. But then immediately mentioning himself, as an Example and Instance of this Truth, by the Name of the *Chief of Sinners*, on account of his having bitterly persecuted the Church of Christ; he plainly lets us know what sort of Sinners they are to whom this Salvation is given, viz. such as have left their Sins: as He had entirely, and with the utmost Ab-

F

horrence,

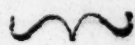
SERM. horrence, that great one of persecuting his  
 IV. Fellow-Creatures on the account of their  
 differing from Him in their Religion, and  
 Worship of God.

IN Pursuance of this main Design of Christianity, all *that name the name of Christ* are commanded *to depart from Iniquity*, 2 Tim. ii. 19. *to have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness*, Eph. v. 11. which cannot be avoided without forsaking them; *to abhor that which is evil*, Rom. xii. 9. *to abstain from all appearance*, or, as the Words signify, *every sort of Evil*, 1 Theff. v. 22. *to mortify their Members which are upon Earth*, under which Expression all Sin is contained, Col. iii 5. Particularly, *He that hath stolen*, is required to *steal no more*, Eph. iv. 28. Agreeably to this, the same St. Paul, describing the Acceptance or Justification, purchased by Christ, expresseth himself thus, Rom. viii. 1. *There is now no Condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*, (i. e. which believe in him, and profess in his Religion) adding these Words, *who walk not after the Flesh*. And ver. 12. *we, Christians, are Debtors, not to the Flesh, to live after the Flesh*: And v. 13. *For if ye live*



*live after the Flesh, ye shall die, i. e. eternally : but if ye, through the Spirit, mortify the Deeds of the Body, (which is a Scripture Expression for renouncing and forsaking all Sin,) ye shall live ; that is, enjoy the Favour of God eternally. In another place, after having reckoned up the Promises of God thro' Jesus Christ, he infers, Having therefore these Promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, 2 Cor. vii. 1. that is, let us, who are Christians, if we hope to obtain the Promises of God, cleanse our selves from all Sin. Timothy is commanded to turn away from, or disown, all such Christians as having the Form of Godliness, deny the Power thereof, 2 Tim. iii. 5. And lest all this should not be sufficient ; continual Warnings are given to such as are professed Christians, of the Danger and Eternal Punishment of Sin. They are assured over and over again by St. Paul, that it is for their Sins that the Wrath of God will come upon them, Col. iii. 6. He appeals to Christians themselves, 1 Cor. vi. 9. Know ye not that the Unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Be not deceived, neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor other Sinners, there counted up, shall inherit the*

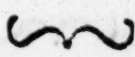
IV.



SERM. *Kingdom of God*, Gal. v. 19, 20, 21; the

IV. Works of the Flesh are enumerated to *Christians*, that is, all the principal Sins, of the which the *Apostle* tells them, as He saith He had before, that *they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*: And at ver. 24. *They that are truly Christ's*, i. e. who will have any Benefit by him, are such as *have crucified the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts*, Chap. vi. v. 7, 8. the *Galatians* are called upon again *not to be deceived*; and assured that *God is not mocked*: but that *he that soweth to the Flesh*, i. e. who doth the Works of the Flesh, *shall of the Flesh reap Corruption*. The *Ephesian Christians* are likewise called upon, *not to be deceived with vain Words*, Eph. v. 6. and assured that *because of these things*, i. e. the Sins before counted up, *the Wrath of God cometh upon the children of Disobedience*; and that no such Sinners as are there mentioned, *have any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God*, ver. 5.

ALL which, as it was the immediate Instruction of God, to his *Apostles*; so was it agreeable to the open Declarations of *Christ*, when He was upon Earth. In his own Account

count of his Proceedings at the great Day, SERM.  
He brings in such as professed themselves his IV.  
Disciples, and had many Gifts to boast of;   
to whom yet he declares He will then say,  
*I know you not, depart from me, ye Workers  
of Iniquity, Matth. vii. 22.* In the Parable of  
the Tares growing up with the Wheat, (by  
which must be meant unfruitful Professors of  
his Gospel) the Tares are ordered at last to  
be gathered for burning, Mat. xiii. 30. And  
at the 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>d</sup> Verses, they which do  
Iniquity are to be gathered out of his King-  
dom (to which they professed themselves to  
belong;) and to be cast into a Furnace of  
Fire: *there shall be wailing and gnashing of  
Teeth.* The Angels are to sever the Wick-  
ed from the Just, and to cast the Wicked in-  
to the Furnace of Fire, v. 47. The Man in  
the Parable, found without a Wedding Gar-  
ment, Matth. xxii. 13. and the unprofitable  
Servant, who had not improved the Talent  
entrusted to him, that is, the Light, and  
Strength afforded him in the Gospel, Matt.  
xxv. 30. are both ordered to be cast into  
outer Darkness, *there shall be wailing, and  
gnashing of Teeth.*



SERM.

IV.



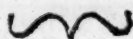
I THOUGHT it fitting to make this Matter so exceeding evident, that there might remain no Doubt of it : and these Texts are so plain, that there can be no Thought of mistaking their Meaning; tho' they be not so many in Number as might easily be alledged from the same Sacred Writings. And can any Christians hear all this, and not argue certainly from hence, that there is a Necessity of forsaking their Sins, in order to any Hopes of Pardon and Acceptance at last? For, if it were the Design of the Gospel to teach, and influence Men to *deny all Ungodliness*; if *Christians* be commanded, upon Pain of God's Eternal Displeasure, to forsake all Sin; if it be declared, both by *Christ* and his *Apostles*, that all *Workers of Iniquity* shall certainly be excluded the *Kingdom of Heaven* : then it is most evident, that unless they forsake their Sins, and are changed from being Workers of Iniquity, they are not truly, and fully, *Christians*; nor shall ever be admitted to the Favour of God, or the Rewards of Heaven.

FROM hence therefore appears most evidently the Truth of the *first* Proposition, *viz.* That it is required, in the Gospel-Dispensation,

tion, of every *Christian*, who hath been, in any sort, or any Degree, a *wilful Sinner*, that He renounce and forsake his Sins. Let us now proceed to the *second*; which will still more confirm the Truth of the *first*: viz.

SERM.

IV.



II. IT is required likewise of Him, that He sincerely, and with Perseverance, practise Holiness, and Virtue.

THIS is almost always, in the *New Testament*, joined to the forsaking of Sin. The *Grace of God* is declared to have appeared, in the Gospel-Dispensation, teaching Men, not only to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, but also to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this World, Tit. ii. 12, 13. And at the 14<sup>th</sup> verse, Christ is said to have given himself for us, not only to redeem us from all Iniquity, but to purify to himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works. Agreeably to this, Christians are commanded not only to abhor that which is evil, but also to cleave to that which is good, Rom. xii. 9. not only to cleanse themselves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, but also to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God, 2 Cor. vii. 1. They are told, that there is but one way of running in the *Christian Race*, so as

S E R M. to obtain the Prize, 1. Cor. x. 24 ; that nothing avails in *Christ Jesus*, that is, in the Christian Dispensation, but a *New Creature*, or an Alteration of every thing that is bad, Gal. vi. 15 ; or, in other Words, that nothing avails, but *Faith which worketh by Love*, ch. v. 6. They are assured that *Faith*, or their believing in Christ Jesus, is made perfect by good Works ; and is dead without them, and of no account before God. Jam. ii. 26 ; that *whosoever shall keep all other parts of God's Law, and wilfully and habitually offend in one Point, is guilty of all*, v. 10 ; that *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*, Heb. xii. 14. And indeed a great part of St. Paul's Epistles is generally spent in inculcating the Moral Precepts of Religion. It is for *them* only, who, by *patient continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory and Immortality*, that *Eternal Life* is reserved, Rom. ii. 7. Nay, it is declared to be so far from being an Advantage to a wicked Man, that he professeth *Christianity*, that it had been better for such an one *not to have known the way of Righteousness*, 2 Pet. ii. 21. As our Lord himself saith, *The Servant who knew his Master's Will, and did it not,*  
shall

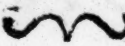


*shall be beaten with many Stripes,* Luke SER M.  
xii. 47. IV.

I MIGHT multiply plain, unexceptionable Passages, without Number, declaring that the Rewards of God belong only to *Righteousness*; that Christians are *called to Holiness*; that unless they *sow to the Spirit*, and *bring forth the fruits of the Spirit*, they must not expect *Life everlasting*; that, *according to what they have done* in this Life, so shall be their Doom: and the like. But they would all, as indeed they are, be only Repetitions, and Enforcements of that most plain and exprefs Declaration of our Lord himself, who best knew the *Terms* of that *Acceptance*, which he himself purchased; viz. Matt. vii. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven:* which utterly precludes all professed Christians from any Benefit from their Religion, unless they conscientiously practise that good, and perfect Will of God, which they know to contain their Duty.

AND this being the declared Nature and Design of the Gospel; this being thus evidently

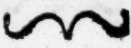
SER M. dently required of Christians, as necessary to

IV.  Salvation, in many plain Passages, uncapable of any other Sense: no Christian can think any thing of Force enough to induce him to doubt of the *Truth* of what I have now laid down in the *Two first Propositions*, viz. that it is absolutely necessary for any Christian, who hath been in any respect a *wilful Sinner*, in order to his Acceptance, and Eternal Happiness, to forsake his Sins; and with Perseverance to practise all Virtue and Holiness, whilst He hath Opportunity allowed him: and that unless He do this so as to make it his own voluntary Act and Deed, (which must be before a *Death-bed* makes it impossible;) and so, as to be deservedly denominated, *holy, righteous, spiritual*, and the like; He cannot have a *Title* to those Rewards, which in the Gospel are promised to none but such as are truly so.

AND thus having established the *Truth* of these *Two first Propositions*, upon such *plain Texts* as cannot be shaken by any thing dubious, or obscure; I proceed

2. SECONDLY, to consider, as I proposed, those Marks of Justice, Reason, and Wisdom, which we ourselves may see to be-

long to these *Two Terms* of the Covenant SERM.  
of *Grace*, thus explained. IV.

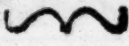
AND here I think I may affirm, That,   
supposing the Nature of *Almighty God* to  
be such as it is; at an infinite Distance from  
all Sin and Iniquity, as well as kindly and  
tenderly disposed towards his rational Crea-  
tures; we cannot imagine any possible Con-  
ditions of the *Acceptance* of *Sinners* to his  
Favour, so free from all Exception, as those  
now laid down in the Two foregoing Pro-  
positions. For if God will at all accept Sin-  
ners to Mercy for the Sake of *Jesus Christ*;  
it must be supposed either, 1. That He will  
accept them, for *his* Sake, let their inward  
Sentiments, and their outward Behaviour,  
continue what they please; that is, that He  
requires nothing at all on their part towards  
it: Or, 2. That He will, for the Sake of *Je-  
sus Christ*, accept them, without any Alter-  
ation in their outward Conduct and Behavi-  
our; provided they do but conceive and ex-  
press a great Sorrow and Concern that they  
have transgressed his Laws: Or, 3. That He  
will, for the sake of Christ, *once* pardon to  
them all their former Transgressions; or that  
he will forgive such a particular Number of  
Trans-



SERM. Transgressions : after which the Sinner

IV. should have no Hope of Pardon, if He should  
 ~~~~~ relapse into the Commission of any *wilful Sin* : or else, 4. and lastly, That, for the sake of *Jesus Christ*, the *Sinner* shall be pardoned who doth, at any time, so forsake his Sins, as to bring forth, in the whole Course and Tenour of his Life, the contrary Virtues, and do the whole Will of God. These are all the *Suppositions* that, I believe, can be thought of, concerning the *Terms* of *Acceptance* of any who have been *wilful Sinners*. Now,

I. LET us examine the first *Supposition*, which puts the Case, as if it were declared that *Sinners* should be accepted, for the sake of *Christ*, whether they regarded his Laws, or not ; whether they altered their Notions, and Behaviour, or not. And what can we imagine a greater Repugnancy to all those Conceptions we have of the holy Nature of God, and of the great Law of Reason, and uncorrupted Nature ? For what plainer Declaration could Almighty God make, to lead Men to think that there was no Difference between *Moral Good* and *Moral Evil* ; that *Virtue* was of no account in his Eyes ; and that

that the Distinction between *that* and *Vice*, SER M.
 was not worthy to be regarded by rational IV.
 Creatures? This would be to make this 
 World an Hell of Wickedness and Misery;
 and Heaven, at last, the Attendant upon *Vice*,
 which would by this means prevail over the
 Face of the Earth, and not upon *Virtue*,
 which would by this means cease from
 amongst the Children of Men. This is to
 suppose *Almighty God* descending in Offers
 of Mercy, in order to encourage Men, in-
 deed, to *continue in Sin*; and causing his
 Son to be born into the World, I will not
 say, to no Purpose, but to the worst of all
 Purposes, *that is*, to the utter Confusion,
 and Disgrace of the Cause of Virtue. It is
 to suppose, either that He hath given no Mo-
 ral Laws to be observed, which we know to
 be false; or that He hath left it indifferent
 whether Men will observe them, or no; nay,
 that he hath sent his Son to assure Men that
 this is an indifferent Matter; which is high-
 ly absurd. It is to suppose such an extraordi-
 nary Person coming into the World in so ex-
 traordinary a manner, for nothing but to
 speak Comfort to the worst part of Mankind,
 even whilst they continue the worst; and
 not

SERM. not to leave them the least effectual Motive

IV. to engage them to make themselves better :
 which is the highest Affront we can offer to Almighty God ; who cannot be supposed, without the greatest Indignity, to visit his Creatures after so extraordinary a manner, in order to carry on a Design opposite to his own Nature. In fine, it is to suppose the Cause of Virtue left entirely unguarded; and the main Encouragements of the Gospel to lie on the side of Vice : which having the Inclinations and Customs of most Men on its side, wants nothing but such a collateral Assistance as this, to enable it to overwhelm the World with an irresistible Torrent.

If any ask, Who are they that ever could think thus of the *Terms of Acceptance* with God ? I may answer, All such as (tho' they do not say it, and speak it aloud, in so many Words, yet,) think and speak, in such a manner, of the Merits of *Christ's* Sufferings, and the Imputation of his personal Holiness to Believers, as to make his *Moral Laws* of none effect, and to render *all Virtue* in *Christians*, a poor insignificant, unnecessary Matter ; unless it be the great Virtue of applying the Merits of *Christ* to our selves : a Virtue,
 which

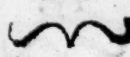
which *They* who have most Spirits, are the most frequently observed to be Masters of: and which hath been too often seen to be founded upon the greatest degree of *Confidence*, and the greatest degree of *Guilt*, mix'd and temper'd together by a strong Fancy, and Imagination. And would not this be the greatest Reflection upon Almighty God, to imagine that He should propose the *Kingdom of Heaven* to *suffer* such *Violence*; not to be *taken* by the *Force* of an holy and exemplary Life, but by the *Force* of a groundless Assurance, and a confident Application of his Promises?

2. IF this be not a tolerable Supposition, let us examine the next Supposition I spake of, concerning the *Terms* of *Acceptance*, viz. That all manner of past Sins shall be wholly pardoned for the sake of Jesus Christ, provided that the Sinner do sometimes, and especially in his last Moments, conceive and express a very great Sorrow, and deep Concern for them. And here, let any one of the meanest Capacity judge, whether this be a tolerable Supposition concerning Almighty God, that He requires our Grief, or our Sorrow, for the sake of it self, whilst nothing

SERM. thing good results from it: which is an Absurdity plainly implied in this Imagination.

IV.

For all Sorrow is, for the present, Misery and Uneasiness, in its own Nature: and Almighty God cannot, in a State of Trial, be supposed to require, or expect, the least Uneasiness in his Creatures, considered as Uneasiness; but merely with respect to their better State, and greater Happiness for the Time to come. Nor doth He ever require our Sorrow, but as the beginning of Amendment, and the first Step to Reformation. But of this I shall have occasion to speak more largely, under the *Second Branch* of my present Design: when I come to examine more at length the false Hopes, and dangerous Mistakes of Men, in this Affair. I shall only therefore at present observe farther, that the Supposition we are now considering, is encompassed with the same insuperable Absurdities, under which the former laboured: *viz.* That Christ Jesus descended from Heaven to teach Men to grieve, and shed Tears; that He hath left Virtue unaccompanied with Encouragements, and hath bestowed his Favours upon that which is not so much as the Shadow of Virtue; upon a Practice

Practice depending more upon a peculiar SERM.
Temper and Constitution of Body, than up- IV.
on any thing truly good and virtuous in the 
Mind. It is to suppose *Almighty God* to
accept, instead of Service, what no Father,
no Master upon Earth, would accept; and,
in one word, it is to suppose God himself
to invalidate and render vain, every Precept
of Virtue, and every Moral Law, from one
End of the *New Testament* to the other:
which who can believe, unless one that can
believe any thing of the Judge of the whole
Earth? Let us therefore,

3. EXAMINE the *Third Supposition*,
viz. That Almighty God declares He is wil-
ling to pardon a Sinner just to such a par-
ticular Term of Life, or such a particular
Number of Sins: but that if, after that, He
shall sin wilfully; He shall be absolutely un-
pardonable. This looks like a very great
Discouragement to Sin: but yet at the End
inevitably leads to it. For what would be
the Issue, suppose any one, after his final
Pardon, should, through the Violence of a
Temptation, be ensnared into a wilful Sin?
What would He think within himself, when
He was once sure that He was in a desperate
G Condition?

SERM. Condition? Would He not certainly find a

IV. fort of a present Refuge, in being more resolute than ever in his wicked Courses, since He could hope for no Good in breaking them off? Considering, therefore, the present Frailty and Weakness of Man, this would be a vast Disadvantage, in the End, to the Cause of Holiness and Virtue. For the promising Pardon to such a particular Number of Transgressions, or to a Course of Sin of such a particular Duration, would almost fatally influence Men, who were not of a sort of Angelical Nature, to venture so far, in some Instance or other, without Fear, or Suspicion of Danger: and all that Time the Cause of Vice would be wholly unrestrained. And then their own Weakness, and the Strength of their evil Habits, would, without all doubt, in some Case or other, carry them so much farther, as that they must come to an hopeless State: and that State of Despair of future Mercy must make them violent and resolved in their Wickedness. Thus we see that even this Supposition, which seems to take most Care of the Cause of Virtue, leaves it, not only in a naked,

ked, and unguarded, but in a very desperate Condition. S E R M.
IV.

N A Y, let us suppose that it was declared only in general, that there was a certain Number of Sins, or a certain Period of Time, beyond which God would not pardon ; and not any particular Number, or Time, specified to the World : yet still most Men, it is too justly to be feared, would first be led by *Hope* to commit many Sins, with a flattering Persuasion that they should not come up to that *Number*, or arrive at that *Period* ; and then, when the Habit was become strong, would be fixed by *Despair* in this Opinion, that being probably got past that Number, and Period, they had e'en as good continue in their Sins, as their Inclination powerfully directs them.

T H U S it appears that we our selves can discover great and considerable Inconveniences in any other Proposal of *Terms* of *Reconciliation* between God, and Sinners, except that which I mentioned in the last place, and have before proved to be the *Truth* of the Matter ; viz.

4. T H A T, for the sake of *Jesus Christ*, the Sinner shall be pardoned, who doth, at

SERM. any time, so forsake his Sins, as to bring

IV. forth, in the Course and Tenour of his Life,
 the contrary Virtues, and sincerely perform
 the whole Will of God. In which Proposal,
 you may see, that when it is said that all *wilful Sinners*, amending their Lives, shall be accepted, there is all the Encouragement possible given to the Practice of Virtue, without making its Cause desperate, even to those who have very much neglected it for the Time past: and that when it is said that no *wilful Sinners*, without such actual Amendment of their Ways, shall be accepted, there is all the Discouragement given to Vice that can be, without throwing the Sinner into such a desperate Condition, as to tempt him to have recourse to his very Sins for Comfort.

I AM not insensible that there is this Inconvenience attending the Promulgation of Pardon and Favour, even upon these Terms; *viz.* That Men of evil Dispositions, and strong Propensions to Sin, but yet not void of all regard to future Happiness, are led from hence to the basest Return to so much Mercy; to imagine, because all wilful Sinners are pardonable upon these Conditions, that therefore all is well, if one time or other
 they

they take care to come up to them: and so, SERM.
 with the Possibility of this, they rather en- IV.
 courage themselves to go on for the present 
 in the Commission of Sin, than immediately
 to forsake it. We find that there were
 some such ungrateful Persons, in the very
 first Ages of the *Gospel*, who basely encour-
 aged themselves to continue in their Sins,
 as if it would magnify the Honour of God's
 Favour, to have more to pardon than they
 had already committed. St *Paul* speaks with
 the utmost Abhorrence of this way of argu-
 ing, *Rom. vi. 1. What shall we say then?*
Shall we continue in Sin that Grace may a-
bound? That is, in order to give the Mercy
 of God an Opportunity of shewing it self
 yet more? *God forbid!* God forbid, indeed,
 that any should be of so unworthy a Temper,
 as wilfully before-hand to encourage them-
 selves to affront their Maker, because He
 hath been so merciful, beyond their Deser-
 vings, as to declare that He will accept them
 whenever they truly turn to him.

I MENTION not this, in order to argue
 at this time with such Persons as these, who
 seem to be in the very next Degree to despe-
 rate and unpardonable; (which one would

SERM, think sufficient to alarm any Men in their
 IV. Senses;) but in order to obviate an Objection

 on which may arise from the seeming Imprudence of openly proposing Favour upon such Conditions, viz. That wicked Men may be led to abuse them to other Purposes, and to their own Destruction: In order, I say, to obviate such an Objection by observing that nothing of this Nature can be framed, but what they may so abuse; that it is fit and reasonable that, in so great a Matter, something should be left to the Application of Men themselves, and to the Sincerity of their own Minds; and therefore that this rather shews the Wisdom of the Dispensation than destroys it; that if our Gospel be ineffectual on this Account, it is so only to those who are lost, that is, to men lost to all Sense of Virtue, or common Gratitude; lost to all that is good and tolerable, and totally given up to worldly or bestial Enjoyments; and that men of such Tempers deserve to fall into such a snare, and appear resolved upon Sin, whatever Terms of Acceptance could have been offered them. Notwithstanding therefore, that this Inconvenience may attend this peculiar Method of Acceptance:
 yet

yet since it is excellently fitted for the Happiness of all who are truly honest and sincere; since it hath been shewn that much greater Inconveniencies must attend all others that can well be thought of; and it is plain that *this* ariseth from an invincible Perversity of Mind; this is sufficient to justify the excellent Contrivance of this Method, above all others. For infinite Wisdom itself can do no more than chuse that particular Method which is the best of all that are possible; and hath the fewest real Inconveniencies attending it; and is most agreeable to the Nature of God, the Condition of Man, and the *End* proposed in it.

I SHALL only add that, from what hath been said, we may learn to adore the Goodness of God in condescending to grant any *Terms* to wilful Sinners; and to admire his Wisdom, in doing this after such a manner as at once to shew the strictest Regard to *Virtue*; and the tenderest Compassion to his Creatures that have erred from the Paths of it. And God grant that we may be of the Number of those happy Christians, who embrace these Terms, and upon them only, seek for Happiness and Eternal Life! Amen!

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Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

S E R M O N V.

LUKE X. The latter part of the 25th
Verse.

*Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal
Life?*



IN answer to the *Enquiry* which I proposed from these Words, *viz.* What it is that is required in the Gospel, of a *Christian*, who hath been in any sort, or degree, a wilful Sinner, in order to his Acquittance, and Eternal Happiness, thro' *Jesus Christ*; I laid down the *four following* Propositions.

S E R M.
V.
~~~~~

I. IT is required of such an one, that He renounce and forsake his Sins.

II. IT is required that He sincerely, and with Perseverance, practise Holiness, and Virtue,

III. IN

SERM. III. IN order to his Acceptance, it is required not only that he forsake his own Sins, and amend his Life in other Instances; but likewise that He entirely forgive the Offences and Trespases of others against himself. And,

IV. IN the Case of *Injustice*, it is not sufficient that the Sinner leaves off Injustice for the future, so far as to do Wrong to no more Persons than those He hath already injured: but He must also, as ever he hopes for Mercy and Acceptance with God, make Restitution of what He hath at any time wronged any one of; and all possible Reparation for the Injuries which he hath heretofore been guilty of.

THE *Two first* of these I considered in my last Discourse, *first*, shewing the *Truth* of them from plain, unexceptionable *Texts* of the *New Testament*, incapable of any other Meaning; and *secondly*, the Reasonableness, and Fitness of the *Terms* of Salvation laid down in them, considering the Nature of *God* and *Man*, above any other, which we could possibly suppose. I come now to consider the *Third* Proposition laid down, *viz.*

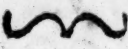
III. THAT



III. THAT it is required of a *Christian*, SERM. who hath been a *wilful Sinner*, not only to v. forsake his own Sins, and amend his Life; but likewise entirely to forgive the Offences, and Trespasses of others, against himself.

THIS Condition of *Acceptance*, as I hinted to you once before, might justly have been reduced to the Two foregoing *Propositions*: because, Forgiveness being a part of Evangelical Duty, and Implacability and Revenge sinful and criminal in their own Natures, it is impossible that a Man should forsake his Sins, which according to the *first Proposition* is absolutely required, without forsaking his Resolutions, and Disposition to Revenge, and Retaliation; or that He should practise all Holiness and Virtue according to the *Second Proposition*, without practising Forgiveness, and demonstrating himself to be of a yielding and placable Temper. But since the Evidence of this Virtue hath been so much over-clouded by the Passions of Men; nay, since it hath passed, in many Cases, almost for a Vice; since our Lord, and his Apostles, added to their general Exhortations concerning Repentance, and

SERM. and Amendment, the most particular Injunc-

v.  tions about this Point; since, even under the Light of the Gospel there are too many, who will hardly be persuaded to put their high Resentments, and Purposes of Retaliation, amongst their Vices, which they are obliged, upon Pain of Damnation, to relinquish, and forsake; and *lastly*, since there is so much said in the *Gospel* of the peculiar Necessity of this forgiving Temper towards our own Forgiveness, and of its peculiar Efficacy towards our Justification, it very deservedly claims a particular Place in our Consideration, when we are enquiring after the *Terms* of our Eternal Happiness: as will appear, I do not doubt, from what I have to offer concerning it. And for your Satisfaction in this Instance, I propose,

1. To shew you, from the plainest Passages of the *New Testament*, that this Forgiveness of others is indispensably required at our Hands, in order to our own Forgiveness.

2. To prevent Mistakes, I design to shew you the true Meaning of what is declared in any of these Texts concerning the peculiar Efficacy

Efficacy of this Virtue upon Almighty God SERM.  
towards our Acceptance with him. And, v.

3. I SHALL shew you the great Reason-  
ableness, and Fitness, of God's requiring  
this of us ; and of our practising it, in its ut-  
most Extent, and Comprehension.

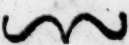
1. I SAY, I design to prove the Truth of  
the Proposition laid down ; and to shew you,  
that the Forgiveness of the Offences and Tres-  
passes of others against our selves is indispen-  
sably required at our Hands, in order to our  
own Forgiveness, and Justification.

THE first Proof we meet with of this, is  
in the Sixth Chapter of St. *Matthew*, part  
of that Divine Discourse upon the Mount, in  
which our Lord designed to let his Disciples  
into the Knowledge of the Nature of his  
Blessings, and of his Doctrine. At the 7th  
Verse we find him teaching them a most  
comprehensive *Form of Prayer* : one Peti-  
tion of which, ver. 12. is this, *Forgive us our  
Debts, as we forgive our Debtors*. The *Debts*,  
by which we have become obnoxious to Al-  
mighty God, are our Sins, and Offences a-  
gainst his Law. Accordingly, in St. *Luke*,  
this Petition is expressed thus, *ch. xi. v. 4.*  
*Forgive us our Sins : for we also forgive  
every*



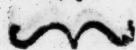
S E R M. *every one that is indebted to us.* This is the  
 v. greatest Proof our blessed Lord could have  
 given of the Importance, and Necessity, of  
 this forgiving Temper in us ; that He hath  
 put it into this very short Form, in which  
 He could not express all things particularly ;  
 and commanded his Disciples to ask Forgiveness  
 of God on no other Terms, but their  
 forgiving the Offences of others against themselves.  
 Forgive us, as we forgive others ;  
*i. e.* as far as we do the same to our Fellow-  
 Creatures ; and no farther ; or, as it is  
 in St. *Luke*, Forgive us, for we forgive all  
 others : as if we ought not to approach God,  
 and could not, upon the Gospel-Covenant,  
 apply to Him for Forgiveness, unless at the  
 same time we could appeal to our own  
 Hearts, and declare that we were entirely  
 disposed to forgive all others.

BUT because this was, to the corrupted  
 State of Mankind, a new Doctrine, tho'  
 eternally reasonable, and good ; our Lord,  
 for the farther Declarations and Explication  
 of his Mind, *Matth.* vi. 14, 15. immediately  
 adds the following Words, *For if ye forgive Men their Trespases* (that is the meaning  
 of *Debts*, ver. 12.) *your Heavenly Father will*

*will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not* SERM.  
*Men their Trespases ; neither will your Fa-* v.  
*ther forgive your Trespases.* As if He had   
 said, Be not surprized that I put such a Peti-  
 tion into the *Prayer*, which I have recom-  
 mended to you ; so seemingly new, upon the  
 Principles commonly received in the World :  
 for I tell you that this is one main part of my  
 Doctrine, and one great Condition of that  
 Forgiveness, which I am to preach, and  
 which Sinners are seeking after, that ye for-  
 give one another ; and that without it God  
 will never forgive you. Agreeably to this,  
*Mark xi. 25, 26.* He tells his Disciples plainly,  
 that this Forgiveness is so necessary and requi-  
 site, that they had as good not pray to God  
 for Forgiveness at all, as to pray to him with-  
 out this forgiving Disposition. *And when ye*  
*stand praying,* (or, when ye are praying to  
 God) *forgive if ye have ought against any :*  
*that your Father which is in Heaven may*  
*forgive you your Trespases.* But if ye do not  
*forgive, neither will your Father which is*  
*in Heaven forgive your Trespases.* It is in  
 vain for you to expect, it is impudent for  
 you to ask, of God, Forgiveness on your own  
 Behalf ;

SERM. Behalf ; if you refuse to entertain this forgiving Temper with respect to others.

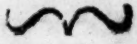
v.



THE same thing, thus plainly expressed, is very significantly set forth, *Matth. xviii. 23.* in the *Parable of a Servant, or Slave*, who owed his Master *Ten Thousand Talents*, which his Master, upon his earnest Request, forgave him. But *He*, little moved with the Compassion of his Master, went and found one of his Fellow-Servants, who owed him an *hundred Pence* : whom, notwithstanding all his Entreaties, He cast into prison, and reduced to extreme Misery, on this Account. But when his Lord heard it, He did not reckon that it was fit to let his former Forgiveness stand good : but gave him up to Misery, and Punishment, till He could satisfy for his old Debt. Of which, for fear Christians should not willingly make the Application themselves, our *Lord* doth it in plain Words, *ver. 35.* *So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye, from your Hearts, forgive not, every one his Brother their Trespases* : that is, He shall rigorously exact of us a due Satisfaction, and Punishment for every Sin we have been guilty of towards him ; if we be so rigorous as

to



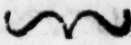
to take Vengeance of our Fellow-Creatures S E R M.  
 for the Offences they have been guilty of to- v.  
 wards our selves. This *Parable* concerning   
 an unconfined Forgiveness, was spoken, up-  
 on occasion of St. *Peter's* Question to our  
 Lord, *ver.* 21. He had naturally a great deal  
 of Warmth in his Temper, and an abun-  
 dance of Heat and Passion, before the Chri-  
 stian Spirit had quelled, and tamed it. This  
 Temper made him willing to hope that, if  
 any Forgiveness was necessary, yet perhaps  
 not a Forgiveness unlimited, and unrestrain-  
 ed; but only a Forgiveness of so many par-  
 ticular Affronts, or Injuries, after which Re-  
 venge (for the Sweetness of which some Men  
 would even be content with receiving Inju-  
 ries) might again become lawful. *Then came*  
*Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall*  
*my Brother sin against me, and I forgive*  
*him? Till seven Times?* He was willing,  
 you see, to allow what we esteem a good  
 Number of Affronts, provided there might  
 be any Hope left of coming afterwards to  
 Revenge again. But *Jesus* saith unto him,  
*ver.* 22. *I say not unto thee, until seven times,*  
*but until seventy times seven:* which An-  
 swer, according to the usual way of speaking,

H

(i. e.

SERM. (*i. e.* putting a definite large Number for an  
 v. indefinite one) manifestly was designed to  
 teach him, and, in him, all Men of the like  
 natural Heat and Fire, that his Doctrine was  
 not designed to fix any Bounds to Forgiveness;  
 but that, as we must have Forgiveness at the Hands of God, not for *Seven Offences*, but for *Seventy times Seven*; not for any particular Number of our Sins, but for all, without Exception, before we can be happy; so, we must forgive our Fellow-Creatures, not *Seven times* only, but *Seventy times Seven*, if there be occasion; even all, and every of their Offences against us.

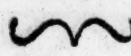
THE same thing, in the xviith Chapter of St. Luke, ver. 4. is expressed by our Brother's finning against us *Seven times in one Day*; where that Number is put for an indefinite Number, because it is not well possible to suppose that any one should be guilty, in one Day, of so many Injuries towards another, as *Seven*. *If He trespass against thee seven times in a Day, and seven times in a Day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.* Here indeed it is put upon the injurious Man's repenting; and coming to us; and begging Pardon;

Pardon ; and declaring his Sense of his S E R M.  
 Crime. But it is manifest that we are requi- v.  
 red to forgive not only when He doth this ;   
 but likewise when He doth not ; because, as  
 I have before observed, we are not to beg  
 Pardon of God any farther than we pardon  
 others ; and we are never to pray for For-  
 giveness, without declaring that we do for-  
 give others ; or without feeling within our  
 selves that we have the Disposition and Re-  
 solution to do it. The same St. *Luke*, ch. vi.  
 ver. 7. records these plain Words of our  
 Lord, *Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven ;*  
 and ver. 38. *For with the same Measure that*  
*ye mete (or measure) withal, it shall be mea-*  
*sured to you again :* that is, if ye do not for-  
 give others, but are rigorous upon them ;  
 Almighty God will certainly be as rigorous  
 upon you, in the requiring Satisfaction and  
 Punishment for every Sin that you have at  
 any time committed against him.

AGREEABLY to this plain Doctrine of  
 their Master, the *Apostles* preached the same  
 universal Love, and unconfined Spirit of For-  
 giveness. St. *Paul* calls upon the *Romans* to  
 lay aside all Thoughts of Revenge, upon  
 any Provocation, or Injury, *Ch. xii. ver. 19.*



SERM. *Dearly beloved avenge not your selves. And*

v. ver. 21. *Be not overcome of Evil, so far as*  
 *to return, and retaliate, Injuries; but overcome Evil, by returning Good for it: which cannot be done without a forgiving Temper. I omit many such like Passages in the Gospels, against Revenge, and Retaliation; because I would confine my self to those Texts which expressly touch the Point in hand. The same St. Paul calls upon the Ephesians; Be ye kind, one to another; tender-hearted; forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you, ch. iv. 32. And addresses himself to the Colossians, ch. iii. 12, 13. after this pathetical manner; Put on therefore, as the Elect of God, holy and beloved, (for so Christians are called in the New Testament) Bowels of Mercies, Kindness, Long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any Men have a Quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. I have now said what is fully sufficient to satisfy you that this Forgiveness of others is indispensably required at our Hands, in order to our own Forgiveness; and that*  
 without

without this we ought not so much as to S E R M.  
ask Forgiveness of God. I shall now, V.

2. J U S T observe to you the true Mean-  
ing of what is declared concerning the Efficacy of this *Forgiveness* of others, upon Almighty God, towards our own Forgiveness, and Acceptance; which is in short this, That, without this Forgiveness of others on our part, He will never finally acquit us from the Guilt of any of our Sins: that it is not sufficient for any Sinner to forsake his Drunkenness, or Uncleaness, or Swearing, or any other Vice; but He must likewise forgive others their Trespases and Injuries against himself: and that otherwise, God will be as severe upon him, and require an Account of every Sin, which he hath at any time been guilty of, through his own life.

I HAVE before shewn you, from the plainest Texts, that it is absolutely required that Men forsake all other Vices; and become holy, and virtuous, in order to their final Pardon, and Happiness. It is impossible, therefore, that what is said concerning the Efficacy of this Forgiveness of others, should invalidate what is said of the Necessity of a good Life in other Respects. I have

S E R M. now shewn you that it is as plainly said as

v. Words can express it, that if we forgive, we  
shall be forgiven. The Meaning therefore  
can be only this, that those Sins which we  
have forsaken, and utterly renounced, shall  
be forgiven to us; if we will forgive those  
Sins which others have committed against  
us: But if we will not, that our Heavenly  
Father will upon no Terms forgive us our  
past Sins; not even tho' we have forsaken  
them. Thus, you see the several Passages  
about these distinct *Terms* are very easily re-  
concilable. God will not forgive us, and  
make us happy, unless we forsake our own  
Sins: nor will He then forgive us, unless to  
this Amendment, in other Instances, we add  
a placable forgiving Temper with respect to  
Neighbours; and readily and heartily remit  
to our Fellow-Creatures, so as not to take  
Vengeance on them, their Offences against  
ourselves. This I just take notice of here: but  
I shall have another Opportunity distinctly  
and fully to handle it, when I come, in due  
Place and Time, to examine those Pretences  
which Men have built upon mistaken and  
misapplied Texts of Scripture: amongst  
which will come in the Pretence of Men, to  
get



get rid of the Necessity of a good Life in S E R M.  
other respects, founded upon the Promise of v.  
God made to this Forgiveness of other Men's  
Trespases, taken distinctly by itself, and se-  
parated from the other Rules of the Gospel.

3. I PROPOSED, in the third place, to  
shew you the great Reasonableness, and Fit-  
ness, that this forgiving Disposition should  
be required by God, and heartily practised  
by us ; as it hath been now explained. A  
very few Words will satisfy us of this : for,

1. IF *this* were so required, as to stand  
in the stead of other Duties, and atone for  
the continued Neglect of them : then fare-  
wel all Hopes of any Virtue, except this, in  
the World : of which I cannot determine,  
whether it would then be a Virtue, or no. In  
vain are all the Promises of God made to  
Righteousness ; in vain are all his Terrors  
displayed against all manner of Sin ; in vain  
are all the Moral Precepts inculcated from the  
beginning to the end of the *New Testament* ;  
if this single Virtue may at last make Atone-  
ment for a Life of wilful, and habitual Sin.  
This shews us the Unreasonableness of sup-  
posing that God can attribute such an Efficacy  
to this, as to make all his other Laws en-

S E R M. tirely of none Effect ; and to give a Loose to  
 v. almost all manner of Vice, and Wickedness  
 ~~~~~ in the World. Nor could any thing be a  
 greater Encouragement particularly to the
 mutual doing of Injuries, than this. It is
 highly reasonable, therefore, that this *For-*
giveness should be required, and favoured, no
 otherwise than as in Conjunction with all
 other Virtues. And,

2. THERE cannot be a more equitable
 and unexceptionable Condition, proposed to
 us than this, that we should not expect that
 Mercy at the Hands of God, which we will
 not shew to our Fellow-Creatures. Who that
 considers the Obligations He hath received
 from *Almighty God* ; the infinite Distance
 between Him and his Creatures ; the Guilt
 and Heinousness of the least Sin, and the
 least Neglect, where so much is, on so many
 Accounts, owing : who that hath common
 Modesty, or the least degree of Considera-
 tion, would not think it fit, to forgive the
 greatest Offences of others against himself,
 (little and inconsiderable, in comparison of
 the least Offences of a Creature against God,)
 and even voluntarily to do this, in order to
 dispose his Judge to be merciful to him ? Or,
 can

can any one think it proper to come into the S E R M.
 Presence of God, and ask or expect Pardon v.
 for his own Sins ; and in the same Breath to 
 tell *Almighty God*, He never can forgive his
 Brother ? *Forgive us our Trespases*, O Lord ;
 tho' we never will forgive those committed
 by frail Men against our selves. Thus doth
 every one in effect pray, who comes before
 God with an heart full of Revenge and
 Retaliation ? or void of Forgiveness, and
 Mercy. And how absurd this is, I need not
 say. Would any Earthly *Master*, as our
 Lord intimates in the Parable, forgive a Ser-
 vant who should openly refuse to forgive his
 Fellow Servant ? or remit his Punishment for
 Crimes against himself, when he saw him
 exercising Barbarity and Cruelty, in reveng-
 ing himself upon his Fellow Servants for
 the least Affronts and Injuries ? Nay, what
 Servant would not gladly comply, and think
 it great Condescension, if his *Master* should
 offer him to forgive him all his Debts, or
 Offences, on Condition that he would do the
 same, with regard to his poor Fellow-Ser-
 vants ? And certainly, there can be no Chri-
 stian, or Man, of so embittered a Temper,
 as not to think this a most reasonable Condi-
 tion

SERM. tion of his own Forgiveness ; or to expect
 v. that God should forgive Him, whilst He
 breathes nothing but Revenge, and Punishment, for every Offence of his Fellow-Creatures. But enough of this. I must now speak a little upon the *last* of the *four Propositions* laid down : which is this :

IV. IN the Case of Injustice, it is not sufficient that the Sinner leave off Injustice, for the future, so far as not to do the least wrong to any Persons, thro' the remaining part of his life : but He must also, as ever He hopes for Mercy and Acceptance with God, make Restitution of what He hath at any time wronged any one of ; and Reparation for the Injuries which He hath at any time heretofore, by Word, or Deed, committed against his Neighbour.

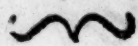
HERE some one may ask, Where is the plain Text of the *New Testament*, which requires this Restitution ? To which I answer, that indeed there is none which in so many Words doth say this ; but that the reason of this is manifestly because this is a part of *Common Justice* ; of the Obligation to which there was ever an open Acknowledgment in all Nations, as of what was no more than one of the lowest Degrees of Virtue. We
 have

have an Instance in the *Gospel*, I mean that S E R M.
of *Zaccheus*, who, when he once came to v.
think of making his Peace with God, de- 
clared openly his Resolution to restore
more than what he had wronged any man
of, if any such wrong could be proved up-
on him. We have it declared by *St. Paul*,
that *neither Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Ex-*
tortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God,
1 Cor. 6. 10. And Eph. v. 5. the Covetous
are reckoned up amongst such as have *no In-*
heritance in the Kingdom of God, and of
Christ. In the *Tenth Commandment*, recog-
nized and reinforced, in the *Gospel*, we
are absolutely forbid to covet any thing that
is our Neighbours. Now whoever doth, af-
ter an injurious Acquirement, or indeed an
Acquirement of any sort, detain what He
knows to belong to another, is most certain-
ly a *Thief*, in the Sense of the Word truly
criminal; a *covetous Man* and an *Extortio-*
ner, who flourishes upon the Spoils of his
Neighbour; and therefore must expect to be
excluded the *Kingdom of Heaven*, as such.
For who is there that can more properly be
said to *covet* what is his Neighbour's, than
the Man who, by Fraud, or Force, retains
in

SERM. in his Possession what He knows another to

v. have a Right to? Common Honesty, and Justice, are what the very Heathens, and even the most Ignorant of them, have ever acknowledged to be Duties. And as surely as the highest Crimes will be punished by Almighty God; so surely the Dishonest, and Unjust, will have a particular Share in his Wrath. The Design of the Gospel was to make *Christians* somewhat more than honest Men: but if They, who have the Light of the Gospel, will not be so much as *good Heathens*, they will be certain to inherit the Punishment of the *worst* of *Christians*, and of such as have refused to practise the very lowest degree of Virtue.

RESTITUTION, and Reparation, I say, are Instances of Justice, strictly due. The continued Refusal of them is a continued Act of Injustice; a continued Theft; a continued Extortion; an Habit of the grossest Vice. And consequently if Injustice it self can never be pardoned, till it be forsaken; this complicated, and continued, wilful Injustice will raise the Account of a Sinner to an unpardonable Heighth. How then can *They* hope for Mercy, who cannot so much as pretend

tend to common Honesty, and Justice; but S E R M.
 every Minute of their Lives are treasuring up v.
 Wrath, and increasing their first Guilt, by 
 approving their own Injustice; and acting it
 anew by refusing to undo it by Restitu-
 tion, and Reparation? Certainly, He that
 can think to go to Heaven without being an
 honest Man, and whilst he robs his Neigh-
 bour every Moment that He lives without
 Restitution, must take it to be the Reward of
 Villainy, and the Receptacle of such Knaves
 as Human Society would not bear, could
 they be fairly detected, and prosecuted.

THIS I have said, because many People
 seem to think *Restitution* to be somewhat
 distinct from *common Justice*, and *Honesty* :
 when truly it is only a Branch of it; and the
 contrary Vice nothing but a complicated
Knavery, and an Injustice, the Guilt of
 which increaseth every Moment; and con-
 sequently, the Continuance in it, utterly
 irreconcilable to all Hopes of Happiness,
 according to the Gospel-Dispensation. I
 might have added more upon this Head: but
 it is not my present Design to enter into the
 Nature of this, or any other, particular Vir-
 tue; but only to shew that *this* is indispen-
 sably

S E R M. bly required in order to the Justification, and
 v. Happinefs, of fuch *Chriftians* as have finned
 ~~~~~ againft the plain Law of Juftice and Honefty.

I HAVE now gone over the *four general Propositions* which I laid down, in answer to the important *Enquiry* after the Way to *Life* and Eternal Happinefs. We fee, from the plaineft Proofs, that there remain no Hopes of Acceptance for Sinners, according to the Gospel, unlefs they forfake their Sins, and praftife Virtue; unlefs they heartily forgive the Trefpaffes of their Neighbours; and make Reftitution of what they have wronged any Man of, according to the utmoft of their Power. From hence appear the Vanity and Folly of building any Hopes of Mercy upon any thing befides thefe, fo clearly, as to need no other Proof. But becaufe the Imaginations of Men have been various in framing other Terms of Acceptance; and preffing even the *New Testament* it felf into their Service: it is another Branch, therefore, of the Defign I have now in View, to examine particularly into their *Pretences*; and to endeavour to fhew fuch Perfons their miserable Delufion. In the mean time, *If we know thefe Things; happy only are we if we do them:* Which God grant, &c. S E R-

*Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.*

# S E R M O N VI.

St. JAMES ii. 10.

*For whosoever shall keep the whole Law,  
and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty  
of all.*



HAVING in several Discourses en-  
deavoured plainly and particu-  
larly to propose the *Terms*, or  
*Conditions*, on which alone  
*Christians*, who have been in any sense, or  
any degree, *wilful Sinners*, may hope to  
be acquitted, justified, accepted, and made  
eternally happy, by Almighty God; it may  
not be improper now to handle this impor-  
tant Subject after a manner, which, tho'  
something different, may yet be of farther  
use to us in our serious Enquiry after the  
Way to Happiness, and Eternal Life. In or-  
der

SERM.  
VI.



SERM. der to this, I could think of no Passage of  
 VI. Scripture, more comprehensive; or more  
 proper, than this taken out of St. James, in  
 which He declares that *whosoever shall keep  
 the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point,  
 he is guilty of all*: and I design, therefore,

I. To explain to you, as well as I can,  
 the true Meaning of the Words.

II. To propose to you the Doctrine  
 plainly taught in them: and to prove the  
 Justice and Reasonableness of it.

III. To answer some Questions, and  
 Doubts, which may arise upon this Subject.  
 And

IV. To draw such Observations, and In-  
 ferences, from the whole, as may be of  
 great use in order to our successful Endeavours after Eternal Life.

I. It is very proper to explain to you, as  
 well as I can, the true Meaning of this Pas-  
 sage: which, as to the manner of Expression,  
 is not without some Difficulty. And,

I. THE Meaning of it cannot be this,  
 that *whosoever transgresseth in one single In-  
 stance*, is as bad a Man; as great a Sinner;  
 as guilty an Offender; as he that transgresseth  
 in every Instance possible: that he who co-

covets his Neighbour's Goods, for Example, is SERM.  
as bad a Man, and as great a Sinner, as he VI.  
who not only covets his Neighbour's Goods,   
but also commits Adultery, Murder, and  
Theft; profanes the Name of God; disho-  
nours his Father and Mother; and breaks  
every Law that he can possibly, in Contempt  
of God, and his Authority. This cannot be  
the meaning of the Passage: because it is ab-  
surd, at first hearing, thus to take away all  
Distinction between the degrees of Sin, and  
Sinners; and to make all Transgressors, tho'  
differing in the Instances, and Number, of  
their several Transgressions, equal in their  
Crimes, and in their Guilt. Nor conse-  
quently,

2. CAN it be understood to imply in it,  
that God will punish all such Persons equally;  
that the Man who offends only in one In-  
stance, shall be made equal, in the degree of  
Punishment, to him who hath offended in  
that, and in many more: because the Pu-  
nishment of Offenders is without doubt to  
be proportioned to their several Offences;  
and because he who offends in many Cases,  
is guilty of a more repeated and settled Con-  
tempt of the Authority of the Law-giver,

I

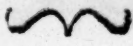
than

SERM. than the other, and therefore must reasonably expect a greater degree of Punishment.  
 VI. But,

3. HE who offends against the known Law of God, in any one Instance, may, on other Accounts, tho' not on these above-mentioned, be said to be guilty with respect to all his Laws.

IN the first place, as he sins manifestly against that Divine Authority which enacted that part of the Law which he transgresseth, as well as those others which he thinks fit to observe. For Sin, tho' committed but in one Instance, is a sort of a Denial of that Authority by which it is forbidden : and this, tho' applied by the Sinner himself to one Instance only, yet affects all others ; because Almighty God hath the same Authority to command, or forbid one thing, that he hath to command or forbid another. Now if we, by our Practice, deny, in effect, his Right to govern us in one Instance ; we do, in effect deny it in all ; because He hath as much Right to do it in this, as in others ; and no more in others than in this. In this respect therefore, whosoever *offends wilfully in one Point*, may be said to be *guilty of all* ; that his wilful



ful offending in this Point, is a Rebellion SERM.  
 against the Authority of God: which touch- VI.  
 eth all his other Laws, as well as this one   
 which he transgresseth: And thus St. *James*  
 himself seems to explain his own Meaning  
 in the Verse immediately following the Text,  
*For He that said, Do not commit Adultery,*  
*said also, Do not kill. If therefore*  
*thou commit no Adultery, yet if thou kill,*  
*thou art become a Transgressor of the Law.*  
 As if he had expressed himself thus. The  
 meaning of my charging a Man who sins in  
 one Instance, with being *guilty of all*, is this,  
 that the same God who forbids the other  
 Sins, forbids this one also. Therefore, if  
 thou dost abstain from the other Sins, and  
 yet wilfully sinnest in this one point; Thou  
 art a Sinner with respect to the other Points  
 as well as this: because God claims no great-  
 er Authority in those other Points than He  
 doth in this: and Thou, by wilfully offend-  
 ing in this one Point, callest in question his  
 whole Authority, and the *Validity* of his  
 whole Law, which hath no more to uphold  
 it in other Instances, than what it hath in  
 this which thou neglectest. And this cer-  
 tainly must aggravate and increase the Guilt

SERM. of one, who wilfully sins in any *one* Instance

VI. only, that it reflects highly upon the whole  
 ~~~~~ Law; and that, by calling in question, or  
 refusing to obey, the Authority of God in
 this one Point, the Sinner effectually calls
 in question his whole Authority, which is
 just the same with respect to others. In this
 Sense therefore, it may be true, that a Man's
 Guilt will not be proportionable to the
 intrinsic Evil of the single Sin which He in-
 dulges himself in; but aggravated by consi-
 dering this Sin, as forbidden by the Autho-
 rity of God; and as having a very bad Influ-
 ence upon that Authority in other respects;
 tending as much to weaken and destroy it in
other Instances, as it doth in effect call it in
 question, and condemn it in *this*.

A G A I N, the *Guilt* of a Man who of-
 fends wilfully in *one* Point of God's Law,
 must likewise be supposed to extend, in some
 degree, to all the rest, because it is certain
 that the same Disposition of Mind which
 engageth, or permits him to transgress one
 Law, when Inclination or Interest, Plea-
 sure or Profit, invite him, would likewise
 prevail with him to transgress any of the
 others likewise, supposing him under the In-
 fluence

fluence of the same Inclination or Interests, SERM.
Pleasure or Profit. For the Occasion of his VI.
wilful Commission of *one* Sin, is that He hath 
some Temptation to it, which He has shewn
to be too hard for his Faith, and his Sense
of God's Authority, to conquer. If there-
fore, he had the same Temptation to ano-
ther Vice; if it were accompanied with the
same Circumstances, equally grateful to his
Sensuality, or Covetousness, or Ambition;
is it not plain that He would equally permit
himself to be carried away with the Tempta-
tion to it? So that his Innocence in other
Respects is not owing to his Virtue, or Faith,
or Sense of God's Authority; but to Necessi-
ty; to his want of the same Inclination,
and the same Temptation to these, which
He hath, with respect to that which He wil-
fully commits. For if he had that Faith,
or Sense of God's Authority, which is suffi-
cient to set him above the same degree of
Temptation to other Vices; this would as
certainly set him above the Power of the
Temptation He hath to this one. And conse-
quently, He must be guilty, in some degree,
with respect to all: because He is so dispo-
sed, as that his Religion, were it to under-

SERM. go an equal Tryal in other Respects, would
 VI. most certainly yield to it in them, as it doth
 in this Instance, in which it pleaseth God in
 a particular manner to try his Faith, and
 Sense of his Authority. I do not say that
 Almighty God will actually punish such a
 Man as much in degree, as if He had been
 tried in all other Instances, and wilfully sin-
 ned in all: but I know not whether in strict
 Justice He might not. And this I say, that
 a Man's Guilt must be in Proportion to his
 inward Disposition; which, it is manifest
 (all Circumstances of Inclination and Temp-
 tation being supposed equal) would produce
 the same Behaviour and Practice in *all* Cases,
 which it doth in *one*. *Whosoever* therefore
offends in one Point only, is *guilty of all*, in
 this Sense; because He would as certainly
 yield in *all*, as He doth in *this*, were He to
 undergo a Tryal, equal in every respect, in
 all other Cases.

AGAIN, the same may be proved, and
 explained, by the Case of such as wilfully
 transgress any Humane Law. Would not
 any Master think his Authority, with respect
 to all his Commands, called in question, by
 a Servant, who should chuse which He would
 obey,

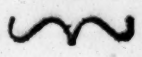
obey, and which He would not, merely by S E R M.
 his own Humour, or Inclination, or Profit; VI.
 and wilfully refuse to obey such a particular
 just and lawful Command, because He had
 no mind to it; or could get more present
 Advantage by disobeying it? And would
 not that Master think that the same Disposi-
 tion of Mind in such a Servant would carry
 him to injure and affront him in all other
 Instances likewise, could He propose to him-
 self the same Pleasure, or Interest, by so do-
 ing? Nay, Would not he speak of him, or
 treat him, as a Person to whom he was obliged
 for no Service performed out of a Sense of his
 Authority, or any farther than his own pre-
 sent Interest directed him? The same may be
 said of any *Lawful Supreme Powers*, and
 the *Subjects* under them; who, if they wil-
 fully offend against any *one* of their just Laws,
 are in some Sense guilty of *all*: as they re-
 bel against the Authority which is the same
 in this Law, as it is in *all* others; and as
 they would certainly offend against *all*
 others, were they not sensible, they could not
 do it, with the same Pleasure or Profit, the
 same Secrecy or Impunity. And who will
 reckon the *material Act* of Obedience, in

SERM. any respect, a Virtue : when it is so certain
 VI. from other Instances, that it had been Dis-
 ~~~~~ obedience, had the same inviting Circum-  
 stances attended it?

IF therefore, any Persons do allow themselves in any one wilful Sin ; they may be certain that their *Guilt* reaches beyond this one Sin, as it includes in it a Contempt of that Authority by which other Sins, as well as this, are forbidden ; and a Disposition which would end in the Commission of all other Sins, were the same Tryals offered them in all respects. *Whosoever* therefore *keepeth the whole Law* besides, and yet *offends in one Point*, is, in this Sense, *guilty of all*. For He that said, *Do not commit Adultery*, said also, *Do not steal*. Now if *thou commit no Adultery*, yet if *thou steal*, *thou art become a Transgressor of the Law*.

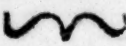
IT seems there were in those Days certain unreasonable Persons, amongst the Christians, who were very ready to obey the Law of God in such Instances as were agreeable to their Inclination or their Interest. But then they desired leave to hope that they might, for the sake of this Obedience, be excused from observing it in some other particular



particular Instance: which to be sure They SERM.  
would chuse out for themselves, according VI.  
to their own Inclination, and Temper.   
Thus they would willingly retain a darling  
Sin; and compound for this, by serving  
God, and obeying his Law, in other Instances,  
in which they did not find so much Difficulty.  
And this, I am persuaded, is the  
Case of many *Christians* now a-days, who  
think, if they observe the Laws of Christ in  
most Instances, especially if they be not guilty  
of open, and notorious Sins, they may  
indulge themselves in *one* Vice, which they  
hope will be atoned for by their Observance  
of the other Evangelical Laws. This Vice  
they chuse for themselves: not being able to  
find any Allowance made by *God* to one,  
more than to another. But, in opposition  
to this unchristian Humour, and fatal Mistake,  
this Affirmation of St. *James* in the  
Text, was designed: which I have explained  
to you; and shall now proceed, as I  
proposed, in the *second place*,

II. To lay down the Doctrine plainly  
taught, or implied, in these Words of St.  
*James*: and to prove the Justice, and Reasonableness  
of it. Now,

I. THE

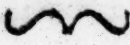
SERM. I. THE least that can be implied in them  
 .VI. is this, that it is not enough for any Man to  
 obey all the other Laws of God, with a silent reserve of so much as one Case, in which he allows himself wilfully to transgress; that the Authority of God equally extends to all his Laws; and that refusal of Obedience in one single Instance is a Rebellion against that Authority; that it is an *Universal Obedience* which God requires, to all his Commands equally, and without Partiality; that Obedience in all Particulars except one shall not atone for the wilful Neglect of that one; but that whosoever doth allow himself in one wilful Sin, under this Pretence, will find himself miserably mistaken, and will be judged and punished at last, as a Contemner of the Authority of God. This is the least, I say, that can be implied in this Declaration of St. *James*: and is no more than what our Lord himself declared, *Matth. vii. 21.* where He openly warns all his Disciples, that nothing can entitle them to an Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, but the *doing the Will of his Father which is in Heaven.* But whosoever wilfully transgresseth in any *one* Point, certainly  
 ly

ly cannot be said to do the Will of God, in SERM.  
that Instance, tho' He doth it in all others. VI.  
Besides, his Will is his *whole Will*, taken all together: and this being a part of it; whoever transgresseth this part of it, doth not do the *Will*, or the *whole Will*, of God. That Man therefore, cannot, upon the Gospel Terms, hope for an Admittance into Heaven, who allows himself in the habitual Commission of any one known Sin; or in any one wilful Transgression of the Will of God. Our *Lord* himself hath in those Words put our Title to Heaven upon our sincere Regard to the whole Will of God in all its parts: as his *Apostle* in the Text, hath utterly precluded all who pretend to observe some parts of God's Law, whilst they wilfully continue in the Neglect of others, from any Hopes of God's Favour.

2. THE Justice and Reasonableness of *God's* requiring this *Universal Obedience* without any Exception to any one Law, or any one part of his Will more than another, is so apparent, that every one can see it in the Case of others, tho' He may be so weak as fondly to hope for an Exemption in his own Case. Put it to the covetous Man, whether



SERM. whether the Condemnation threatned a-

VI.  gainst the more expensive Vices be not just and fitting ; who more ready to join in it than himself ? Put it to the Voluptuary, whether it be not highly reasonable that the Wrath of God should be reveled, and executed, against so vile a Crime as Covetousness ; and you need not doubt of his Approbation of it. So will the dishonest Man condemn the Uncleanneſs of another ; and the unclean condemn the dishonest : every one thinking (if they think at all of such Matters) that any particular Transgression of God's Law must in reason be punished by God ; so it be not that of which they know themselves to be guilty, and for which they have their own peculiar Temper, Inclination, or Interest to plead. This indeed they will inwardly except ; out of a Self-Love and an Aversion to Misery : but yet even this they do, only with some faint Hope ; not with any fixed Judgment, that it will not be highly fitting even for this particular Sin to receive its just Reward. But suppose this were their fixed Judgment in their own Case ; we know their Judgment is bias'd when themselves are concerned ; and much more

more free when it is the Case of others about which they are to judge. SERM. VI.

LET, therefore, but the Judgment of Christians be enquired into, about the Case of others living but in one known Sin, for which themselves have no Fondness, or Inclination; and you will find them all allowing that this continued Course of one particular Sin is a most high Provocation to God; a continued Affront to his Authority; and what justly deserves to be punished at last, when He shall come to judge all Men for their Offences against him.

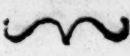
BUT, farther, if this *Universal Obedience* were not the Condition of Eternal Happiness; what would Men have to do, but to chuse out the Vice for which they find the greatest Fondness in themselves, and that which will be most agreeable to them; and give themselves all that Loose in this, which can be consistent with the Observation of the other Laws of the Gospel? Nay, where would be the Harm, upon this Supposition, if each Man chose to himself Two or Three Darlings out of the whole Catalogue of Sins, to love, and pursue? If God can be supposed to pass over the continued wilful Violation  
of

SERM. of his Laws in *one* Instance, for the sake of

VI. Obedience in others ; why not in *Two* Instances, if the same Excuse of Inclination, and Temptation, can be pleaded ? Thus every Man may have his Idol, set up in the same Heart in which God places his Temple : and which do you think will have the greatest Share of Adoration, and Service in this Competition ? Why, it is plain that God Almighty can have only that Service which the Idol can spare ; no more Love, or Obedience, than what is consistent with the Prosecution of this particular Vice now supposed to be connived at by God. And can any one think it tolerable to entertain such an Opinion of Almighty God, as makes his Will to truckle to a beloved Sin ; and to accept of so much Service only as *that* can spare, without being neglected it self ? Can any one think it pardonable in himself to think thus of the wise, and holy God, that He can give a Licence after such a manner to any one Vice : much more to think that He can give such Allowance to all Vices ?

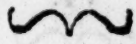
FOR I must observe farther, that this Supposition would not only be an Allowance to any one particular Vice ; but in general  
to



to *all*, and every one. For if Almighty SERM.  
 God be supposed to overlook the Covetous- VI.  
 ness of one Man, for the sake of any other   
 Virtues; He must, by the same Reason, be  
 supposed to connive at the Dishonesty of a-  
 nother; at the Uncleaness of a third; at  
 the Drunkenness of a fourth; and so conse-  
 quently, at the particular Vice to which any  
 particular Person hath addicted himself. For  
 by the same Right that we chuse our own  
 Vice, which we think to except from his  
 Anger and Condemnation; by the same  
 Right, I say, another chuses another Vice,  
 agreeable to his Temper, Inclination, and  
 Opportunities. And by this means not only  
 our darling Vice is excepted; but the dar-  
 ling Vice of every one in particular: which  
 brings in an Encouragement to universal De-  
 bauchery, and to every Instance of Folly,  
 and Wickedness. The Adulterers, Forni-  
 cators, Drunkards, Swearers, Extortioners,  
 Covetous, Malicious, Revengeful, Back-  
 biters, Envious, Murtherers; all who are  
 expressly excluded the *Kingdom of Heaven*  
 in the *New Testament*, may at this rate en-  
 tertain Hopes of getting into it by this Arti-  
 fice: if they can but plead an Observance of  
 God's

SERM. God's Law in other respects ; and a strong  
 VI. Inclination, and Temptation, to that parti-  
 ~~~~~ cular Vice, in which they have indulged  
 themselves. As unreasonable then, as it is
 to suppose Almighty God to leave room for
 Hopes of Indulgence, or Pardon, to all man-
 ner of Vices, so they meet not in *one* Per-
 son ; so reasonable is it, to believe that an
Universal Obedience, without Partiality, to
 all his Laws, is the only Obedience to
 which He hath annexed the Promise of our
 inheriting Eternal Life.

AGAIN, if this be not the one only Rule
 for us to go by, in this Affair ; we must sup-
 pose our selves left to our own Government
 and Guidance, much more than is really
 consistent with supposing God to be our
 Lord and our Legislator. For, according
 to this Supposition, it doth not depend upon
 Almighty God, what Laws shall be obli-
 gatory to us ; but upon our selves, and our
 own Humour, or Inclination ; our Pleasure,
 or Profit. For we are to pick and chuse out
 of all the Laws, He hath given us, which
 it is our Pleasure to neglect ; and to except
 out of all the Sins, which He hath in general
 condemned, that particular Sin which we
 I have

have a mind to indulge. And tho' God hath SERM.
 declared it, amongst others, to be a damn- - VI.
 ing Sin; yet at this rate we have it in our 
 Power to reverse this Decree, and to alter
 the Nature of it: that so, what God hath
 declared pernicious, and fruitful of Misery,
 shall become, by our own favour to it, of an
 harmless and innocent Nature; only an In-
 stance of our Frailty, and a Subject for his
 future Mercy to exercise it self upon. He
 hath told us, that if we be not Doers of his
 Will we must expect his Wrath, and Eter-
 nal Displeasure: and if this be not so, then
 we are our own Directors, and in great Part
 out of his Jurisdiction; I mean, if we can
 frame another Rule for our selves, and op-
 pose it to his. He commands obedience to
all his Laws. We claim a Right to except
one. He forbids every *Vice*. We pretend
 a Privilege to retain *one*: and promise him,
 we will be as careful as can be in other In-
 stances, if He will overlook this. After this
 manner, I say, we take our selves from un-
 der his Government; and assume a Domini-
 on over ourselves in some Instances, equal to
 what we pretend to allow to him in others:
 But nothing can be more absurd than this:

K

and

SERM. and consequently, without universal, im-
VI. partial Obedience, we can have no Hopes
to inherit his Rewards, or escape his Punish-
ments.

BUT, last of all, the Supposition of his accepting of an Observance of *some* parts of his Will, from Men who continue in the known Neglect, and wilful Violation of *others*, is directly contrary to the Design of Christianity; and destructive of the main End of the Gospel. For it was a Regard to universal Holiness; to a more perfect Obedience to the Laws of Righteousness, and a more perfect Freedom from all Sin, that engaged God to send his Son into the World; and that influenced our Lord to undertake his great Work. He appeared to put away and destroy, not one, or two, but all *the Works of the Devil*. His Grace was revealed to teach Men to deny Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts; without Exception, and without any Reserve to what might be the peculiar Favourite of any Man. And it is a contradicting this Design; a frustrating this End; if he hath left any Hopes of the Mercy which he purchased, to Those who allow themselves in any one of the Works of the Devil;

Devil ; or continue in any sort of Ungodli-
ness ; or in any one wordly Lust.

SERM.
VI.

BESIDES, the Case of the Generality, or Bulk, of Mankind being manifestly this, that it is one particular darling Sin that enslaves the Man ; that he is devoted to this, and for this often neglects other Sins, as well as his Duty : it was without doubt to engage Men to leave the Sin *which doth so easily beset them* ; to disengage them from that Bondage which This kept them in, that the *Son of God* appeared in the Flesh, and instituted his holy Religion. I know, there are Men who seem, without Distinction, to be under the Government and Influence of a whole Body of Sin : to be as covetous, for Instance, as is consistent with their other Vices ; and as vicious in other respects as is consistent with their Covetousness, and worldly Designs. But the Case of Multitudes is, that it is one Vice which generally enslaves them so much, that they can willingly sacrifice other Vices, as well as their Virtue, to it. And now put the Case, that our Lord can be supposed to give any Ground for hope of Favour to such Persons, continuing in this State, upon Condition they do, in other Points,

SERM. observe his Laws: and what Good could his

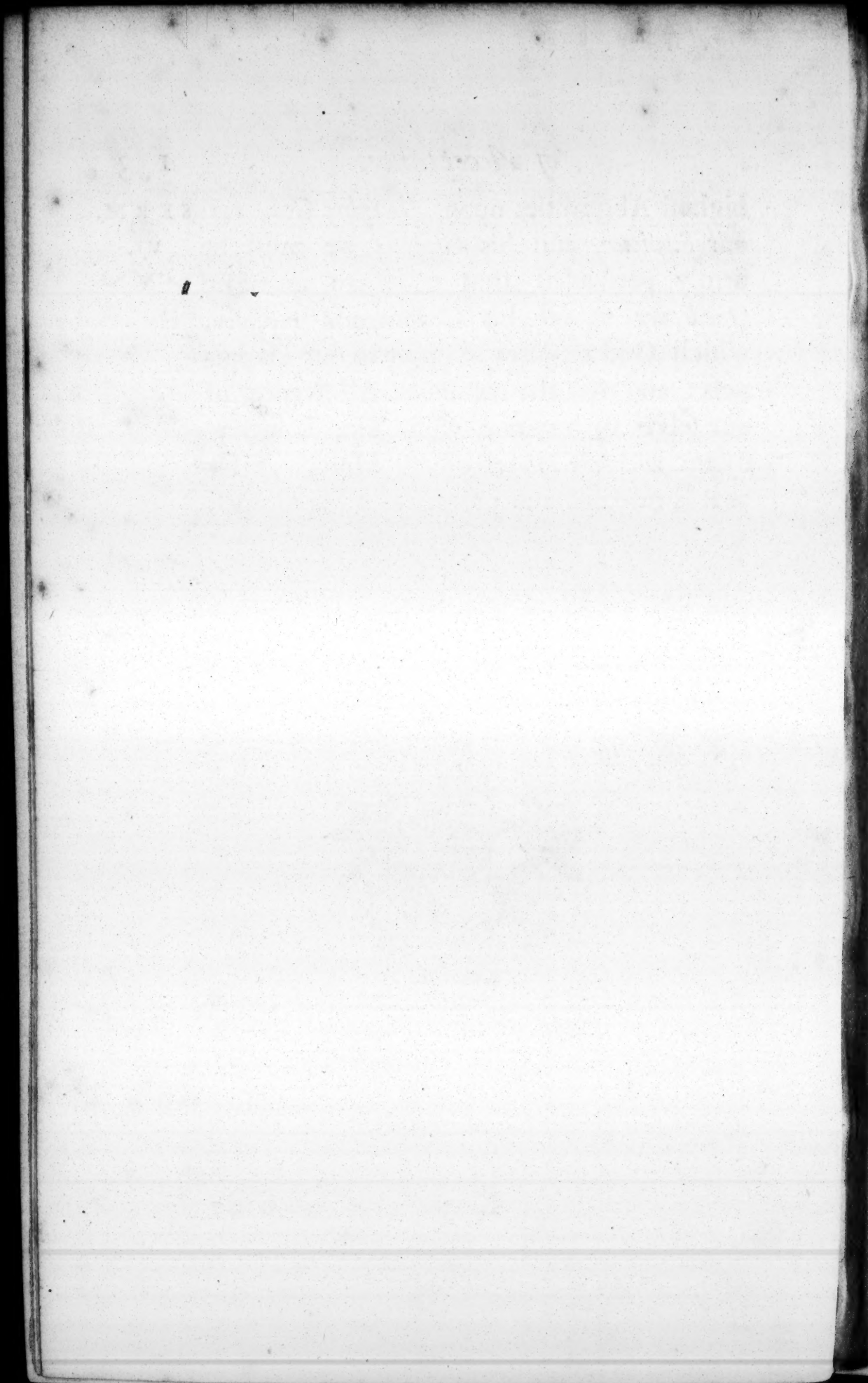
VI. coming into the World be supposed to do, if

He brings along with Him any such Indulgence as gives Encouragement, and Strength to the darling Vice of every Man, who believes in him? Where would be any Endeavours after the *Perfection*, talked of in the Gospel, and becoming Humane Nature? Where would be the Truth of that Proposition, that Christ came to *call Sinners to Repentance*, and Amendment? How vain must his professed Design be, and how unworthy of an holy, and wise God; if He be supposed to appear so partially in the Cause of Virtue? How might the *Heathen Philosophers* themselves have boasted that their own Schemes were more worthy of the Deity? and have drawn an unanswerable Argument against the Divine Authority of an Institution, in which Allowance was given, in effect, to any Sin or Wickedness Men would particularly give themselves up to? But I have said enough upon the present Head.

THE remaining part of what I proposed upon this Subject, I must reserve to another opportunity. But from what hath been said it is evident that, if we would not fix the
highest

highest Absurdities upon *Almighty God*, and S E R M.
our *Saviour*, and his *Gospel*; we must be VI.
firmly persuaded that it is an *universal* ~~~~~
Obedience to all his Commands equally,
which God requires in order to our Happi-
ness: and that the continued Allowance of
our selves in any one wilful Sin, is incon-
sistent with all Hopes of his Mercy, as far
as it is revealed and promised in his Gospel.





Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

S E R M O N VII.

St. *JAMES* ii. 10.

*For whosoever shall keep the whole Law,
and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty
of all.*



IN my last Discourse I propo-
fed, S E R M.
VII.

I. To shew you the true
meaning of these Words.

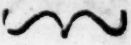
II. To lay down the Doc-
trine certainly taught, or implied, in them.

III. To answer some Questions which
may arise upon this Subject.

IV. To draw such Observations and In-
ferences, from the whole, as may be of use,
in order to our successful Endeavours after
Eternal Life.

SERM. As to the *first* of these; I then shewed
 VII. you that one who allows himself in the wilful Neglect of any known Duty, or in the wilful Commission of any known Sin, may justly be said to be guilty, with respect to the other parts of God's Law, as well as this particular Instance, as he sins against that Divine Authority by which the whole was enacted; and as the sinning against that Authority in one Instance doth imply in it a Neglect and Contempt of it in all others also, in which it is of no greater force or account, than it is in this Particular: and likewise, as the Disposition of Mind which permits or induceth the Sinner wilfully to transgress in one Instance, would inevitably produce the same Effect, in other Instances, supposing all the Circumstances of Inclination, and Temptation, to be equal.

As to the *second* Head; I shewed you that the main Design of the Passage was to assure Men of the Folly of imagining that they could atone for the wilful Violation, and continued Transgression, of any one Law of God, by the Observation of others: and therefore, that the least that could be intended by St. *James* in it was this, that
 it

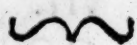
it is an universal Obedience to all his Laws S E R M.
 which God expects of Christians; that if VII.
 they think to except any part of his Will 
 from their Observation, and that He will excuse this for the Sake of Obedience to other parts of it, they will find themselves miserably deluded; and that nothing can recommend them to his Favour at last, but a sincere, constant, and universal Obedience to all his Commands, without Partiality, and without Exception; and that upon the Condition of such an Obedience, for the Time to come, any Christian who hath been a Sinner, may hope for his Mercy, thro' *Jesus Christ*: but not without it; as far as we know of his Will declared in the Gospel. This I shewed you to be plain from these Words of *St. James*, as well as others of our *Lord* himself: and likewise from the many Absurdities following from the contrary Supposition. I come now,

III. To consider some Questions, and Doubts, which may arise upon this Subject.

Now there are Two which presently offer themselves to our Thoughts. The *first* is this, Whether it doth not follow from what hath been said that Almighty God requires

SERM. quires of us a perfect, sinless, Obedience.

VII. To which I answer,



I. IT is certain that God requires an Obedience to all, and every of his Commands; at all Times, and in all Places equally: and likewise that there is no one Sin, or Transgression of his Law, in any one Instance, but what He disapproves of, and absolutely forbids. And therefore, if our Practice were directed, without Variation, by his Rules; it would be a perfect and sinless Obedience. In this Sense therefore, it may justly be said that He requires a perfect, sinless Obedience at our Hands, free from all wilful Sin. And wilful Sin being that which we could have avoided, if we would; it is certain, He may justly forbid, and condemn it in every Instance. Nay, this we might be certain of, without any express Revelation, that the supreme infallible Understanding, the most wise and holy God, could not but will that every Law of Reason should be strictly and constantly observed by reasonable Creatures: and could not but condemn all wilful Transgressions of it, as the most unreasonable and absurd Practices. But now, since this is such an Obedience as was never
yet

yet actually performed by any Mortal ; every Man in the World having found himself surrounded with Infirmities, and misled by Temptations and Trials, in some Instance or other, so as that He cannot but confess himself guilty of some wilful Deviation, in some Point or other, from the Rule of right Reason, and the Will of God ; it remains to enquire what *Condescension*, is shewn by Almighty God, in the Gospel, thro' *Jesus Christ*.

SERM.

VII.



2. THEREFORE, it is certain, from the Gospel, that every wilful Transgression of his Law is not unpardonable : for the Design of it, was to offer Pardon upon some Conditions to wilful Sinners. This is very consistent with the former Proposition : For, as a Father may command such and such Particulars ; and yet admit his Son to Reconciliation, upon some Terms, after he hath transgressed any of these Commands : so likewise may Almighty God require Obedience to every one of his Commands, at all Times, and in all Places ; and yet, after any have been so unhappy as wilfully to transgress any of his Commands, He may forgive them these Transgressions, upon some certain Terms

SERM. Terms and Conditions. It is, therefore,
 VII. certain that Almighty God forbids every Sin
 always, and enjoins the Practice of every
 Virtue at all Opportunities; and in this
 Sense may be said to require a sinless Obedi-
 ence: and it is as certain that there is room
 left by his open Declarations, for Favour
 and Mercy to such as have wilfully commit-
 ted Sin. It appears, therefore,

3. THAT the Perfection, which is so re-
 quired of Christians, as that they shall not be
 made happy at last without it, is Amend-
 ment and Reformation in those Instances in
 which they have wilfully failed; and a con-
 stant Progress in Virtue and well-doing.
 This State of the *Case* at once guards against
 that comfortless Doctrine, on the one
 hand, that God will insist at last upon that
 spotless and absolute Perfection which never
 was yet known in a Mortal: and against
 that fatal Mistake, on the other hand, that
 He will accept Sinners to Mercy, for the
 Sake of Christ, tho' they have no Signs in
 their Lives and Behaviour, of their hearty
 Repentance, and Detestation of Sin.

THE Perfection required of Man, in a
 State of Trial and Probation, cannot, be a
 State

State incapable of Improvement: because S E R M.
 this seems not attainable in such a State by VII.
 such a Creature; or, at least, never was actu- 
 ally attained by any. And who, according
 to this Rule, supposing this to be required,
 could come to any well-grounded Hopes of
 Happiness? For who in his Senses can think
 himself at any time so good, so perfectly
 free from every thing evil, as He might pos-
 sibly be? But it must consist in a daily Pro-
 gress, and sincere Endeavour, after Perfecti-
 on; in an increasing Conquest over what is
 evil in us; and in a daily acquiring more
 and more of those good Qualities, in which
 we can think our selves defective. This
 progressive Motion in the Paths of Virtue,
 and this increasing Conquest over Sin, will
 sufficiently demonstrate the sincere Repen-
 tance of a Sinner; and will be a good Foun-
 dation in his breast, for Hope and Comfort.

IN this Sense therefore, God requires uni-
 versal Obedience to all his Commands e-
 qually; and insists upon it as a Condition
 without which we shall not be happy at last,
 that in what Instances soever we have in
 Time past offended, in *these* He expects us
 for the future to amend; that in what Points
 soever

SERM. forever of the Law of Righteousness we are
 VII. defective, He absolutely requires an Improve-
 ~~~~~ ment in them ; a Progress, or growing, in  
 all that is good ; a Departure, or flying, from  
 every thing that we know to be evil. He  
 will bestow no Happiness upon those who go  
 on to allow themselves in any one known  
 Transgression of his Law : till Death over-  
 takes them ; nor doth He in the Gospel give  
 us Ground to entertain any Hopes, that they  
 shall ever experience his Favour, or be put  
 upon the Level with such as by patient Con-  
 tinuance in well-doing seek after Glory and  
 Immortality.

THIS, therefore, is a sufficient Answer  
 to the *first Question*, concerning the Obedi-  
 ence required to all God's Commands ; that  
 it cannot be so understood, as if He would  
 not make any happy who had not arrived in  
 this World at a State of *absolute Perfection*  
 and Freedom from every degree of Sin, or  
 moral Evil : but must be understood thus,  
 that He doth absolutely require of all who  
 know themselves to have been in any respect  
*wilful Sinners*, that they do sincerely set a-  
 bout the Work of Amendment ; and de-  
 monstrate their Sincerity by getting Ground  
 of

of their Vices : by proceeding to greater degrees of Virtue ; and by going still more and more towards the Perfection of rational Creatures ; at least, till they are out of the Power and Dominion of any known Sin ; and till they are in such measure possessed of the contrary Virtue, as to be justly denominated virtuous in that Instance in which they know they have been vicious. This is a State of Perfection to which the meanest Christian may arrive ; if He knows but what Virtue and Vice mean. This is that Condition of our Acceptance, that Law of the Gospel, which will admit of no Abatements at the great Day. And it is an invaluable Mercy, that God will accept of this Progress, and Improvement in Virtue, instead of a State of blameless Perfection.

THE *second Question* which offers itself, now we have been speaking of the *Terms of Favour* proposed in the *Gospel*, and the Conditions of our Acceptance at last, is this, How we shall be able to form a good Judgment concerning our own Condition ; or to know when we are in such Circumstances, as to be able to have a well-grounded Hope unto Eternal Life.

WHAT

SERM. WHAT I have said concerning the *last*

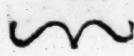
VII. *Question* will help us in the resolving this  
to our own Satisfaction: but I shall not refer to that; but be a little more particular. I am sensible, indeed, that many desire to know exactly what is barely enough for their Happiness, for fear they should do too much for themselves; not out of any Love to Virtue; but indeed out of Love to Vice, which they would gladly retain something of, if they could with any Safety. This, I believe, is impossible to be defined exactly, so as to suit all Cases: God having never declared what is the lowest Pitch of Holiness that He will accept of at last. And I cannot but think it wisely concealed from Men; that so Sincerity may be encouraged, and a Love to Virtue, which seems impossible to consist with the Notions of such Inquirers; that so the more may depend upon Men's own Integrity; and lest the general Progress in the Paths of Virtue, should be more stinted than it is already: it being too probable that most Men would be content to place themselves just out of Danger, rather than to make any large Progress in the Ways of Righteousness. For there is a great deal of difference



rence between the Love of future Happiness, S E R M.  
and the Fear of future Misery ; and much VII.  
more in the latter that moves the Actions of  
most Men, than in the former ; and Ground  
enough for Suspicion, that if Men could but  
secure themselves from Punishment in the  
Life to come, they would stop just at that  
Pitch which they knew would do that, and  
not greedily aspire after such Degrees of Vir-  
tue as would carry them to great Heights of  
Happiness. But tho' it be impossible to sa-  
tisfy all the Inquiries of such Persons, as  
these ; who indeed cannot be in a safe way,  
whilst they are of a Temper so little a-kin  
to Sincerity, and a serious Love of Religion :  
yet it may be possible to offer such Consid-  
erations as may help other more truly sin-  
cere Christians to judge whether they have  
Ground to hope that they themselves are so  
disposed, and so free from Sin, as to be with-  
in the Covenant of Grace and Mercy, the  
Conditions of which I have, in some for-  
mer Discourses, been representing and ex-  
plaining to you.

H E, therefore, who makes no other use  
of the gracious Proposals of the Gospel, but  
to encourage himself to recover from any  
L Sin,

SERM. Sin, of which He knows he hath wilfully

VII.  been guilty ; and is so affected by any Instance of his past Weakness, as to keep a greater and stricter Watch over himself for the Time to come ; He, who at any time finds, upon a review of himself, that, tho' He be not absolutely perfect, yet He gets Ground of his Imperfections, and proceeds, by a daily Course, farther and farther, in the Paths of Virtue ; He, who carefully avoids the Opportunities and Temptations, by which He knows He hath formerly fallen, may reasonably conclude that He is truly sensible of the Importance of Holiness, and of the Necessity of forsaking his Vices, and sincerely disposed to practise the one, and relinquish the other. He, who, when He unavoidably, and without any Fault of his own, meets with the same Trials, and Temptations, which have formerly vanquished him, finds his Belief of a future State and Sense of his Duty strong enough to vanquish them, and resist all their Arts and Force, hath good ground to Hope that He is in a Way acceptable to God.

IN some Cases, the Rule for this Judgment is so manifest that it cannot be mistaken.

ken. He who hath robb'd or cheated his Neighbour after any manner ; whether by the Smiles of a Friend, or the Force of an Enemy ; cannot but know whether He hath, or hath not, made Restitution, to the utmost of his Power, of whatsoever He hath thus obtained by Fraud or Force. This is what removes the Guilt of that Injustice : and without this it is impossible He can think that He comes up to the *Terms of Acceptance*, or is in a safe Way to Happiness. So likewise, in all other sorts of personal Injuries, whether respecting the Reputation, or Quiet, of our Neighbour ; He who doth to his utmost make Amends for the Damage received, comes up to the *Terms of Acceptance*, as far as this Crime is concerned. So that in this Case it is too easy to judge, for Men to pretend an Evasion. In fine, *He* is certainly in a safe Way, who, in this State, which, as I said, is not a State of absolute but of increasing Perfection in Virtue, is ever studying what He hath to subdue in himself, and is always subduing it by the Power of Religion.

ON the contrary ; He, who takes Encouragement before sinning from the Doctrine



SERM. of Acceptance and Reconciliation, delivered  
VII. in the Gospel, to venture still farther in the  
~~~~~ Paths of Sin, with a foolish Hope of coming up to the *Terms* of that *Acceptance* some time or other, is as yet in a very unsafe Condition; without any the least Ground of Hope from those Terms of Favour which He thus abuses to his own vile Purposes. He, who finds himself led by his sinning at any time, rather to love the Sin than to detest and guard against it; rather, to run to the Temptation, than to fly from it, hath too much Reason to suspect his own Case. He, who finds his Sense of the Importance of Morality and Virtue diminishing, and the Power of the World, or the Flesh, increasing over him, so far that he is still every Day carried by their Allurements, or Affrightments, into the Practice of Sin, may be sure that he is rather laying up for himself the Matter of a terrible Repentance to come, than truly repenting at this time of any thing past. He, who keeps Possession of what he hath unjustly obtained; or refuses to do right, or make Restitution, to his Neighbour whom he hath injured; how deep soever his Sorrow, how many soever his  
his

his Tears may be, is far from the Way of SERM.
 God, or any well-grounded Hopes of Salva- VII.
 tion, upon the *Gospel-Terms*. In a word, ~~~~~
 He, who finds within himself that his Vir-
 tue grows less, and his Passions increase in
 Strength; that he is so far from getting
 Ground of them, that they get ground of
 him every Day, is in the worst Condition
 we can well imagine. And He, who finds
 that he is a Captive to any one wilful Sin;
 that he has not yet made any successful
 Warfare against it; that he hath not yet got
 out of its Power; that his Faith in God, his
 Sense of Religion, his Belief of a future
 State, are not sufficient to disengage him
 from it; but that it keeps its Ground, and
 is too hard for the Resistance of his Virtue,
 may be sure that He is not yet in such a
 Condition, as that He may at all depend up-
 on the Favour of God, promised in the Gos-
 pel to returning Sinners; having not yet
 made himself any more obedient to his whole
 Will than He hath been in Time past.

THESE Particulars I have laid down
 briefly: but hope the Consciences of all,
 who are any ways concerned, will apply
 what has been said to their own particular

S E R M. Cases; without any such foolish Partiality

VII. as may endanger their own Eternal Salvation. But if they will not act sincerely with

themselves, when themselves only are concerned, and when Almighty God hath shewn such a tender Regard to their Interest; but, on the contrary, will endeavour, and labour hard, to put a Cheat upon their own Souls: how wonderfully strange is this? and how little Thanks will they owe themselves, when they come to feel the Effect of so wilful a Delusion! After having spoken to these *Two Questions*, I come now, in the last place, as I proposed,

IV. To draw such Observations and Inferences from the whole, as may be of use to us in our successful Endeavours after Eternal Life. These are such as our Thoughts, I hope, have been naturally led into already by my past Discourses; and will often run into, when we come to retire, and to consider of our true and eternal Interest. The Time will now permit me to mention but Two or Three. As,

I. FROM the very Words of St. *James* in the Text, and the lowest Sense in which they can be understood. as well as from the
Absurdity

Aburdity which I have shewn in the contrary Supposition, it is evident that, upon the Gospel Terms, there is no such thing as atoning for the Neglect of one Virtue by the Performance of others; nay, nor by the Performance of every other Virtue. S E R M,
VII.

2. FROM what hath been said let every one observe, that it is not Inclination, or Custom, that can excuse or bear them out in the continued Commission of Sin, or in the repeated Neglect of any known Duty. For God excepts no Sin from his Condemnation; no Duty out of his Commands. He requires all equally, as we have seen: and to pretend to exempt our selves, is to put our selves out of his Jurisdiction, and Government; and to set our Humour and Inclination above his Law, and Authority. Yet how many Men do we meet with, who are apt to think their own Sin, to which they are most inclined, and most easily seduced, to be out of the Number of the condemned Vices; or else to hope that God will depart from his settled Rules, on purpose to release their Punishment. They will pray, and hear; and perhaps receive the Sacrament; and do several good Actions, to the end that their

S E R M. Inclination may be allowed of by God Almighty : and as long as they do what they have no great Temptation to allure them from doing ; or omit that Sin to which they are under no strong Bias : they foolishly imagine that their Inclination and Bias to another Sin will be Excuse enough for their Darling and Bosom Vice. But, if St. *James* says true, they who are, in one Instance, Transgressors, are Sinners against all the Law, and the whole Authority by which it was enacted.

3. LET the very best of us be led, by what hath been said, to look narrowly into our selves, and to see whether there be not some latent Root of Vice in us : some secret and less observed Instance, in which we transgress the Will of God. The Christian World is come to that pass, that He who is not guilty of open Acts of notorious Sin, Drunkenness, Adultery, Blasphemy, Revenge, or the like, passeth for a good Christian : and many think it well with them, because they cannot accuse themselves of such Sins. And so far indeed it is well. But alas ! Though they be not thus openly lewd, and profligate : yet perhaps, there remains something

something in them that requires, and is worthy of, a Cure. They are not Swearers, or Drunkards, or Unclean, or Profane: but perhaps, a silent Discontent eats thro' their Hearts; a secret grudging and repining discomposeth their Nights and Days; Envy gnaws upon them; or some Passion or other torments, and holds them Captive. Some Imperfection or other we may find, if we turn our Eyes more to what we have of Evil in us, than to what we have not. And here lies the Business of every Christian, to conquer his own proper Enemy. If we have no very great ones; if we be out of the Reach and Power of the most formidable: the more Shame and Ignominy, to be led captive and spoiled by those of less Strength, and less Account. Let us not think it beneath us to exert ourselves against the least of God's Enemies, and our own. Since 'tis a Progress towards Perfection that is required of us; let us think and act, as if we thought it our Duty to make this Progress.

IF thro' the Happiness of a good Disposition, and careful Education, we have escaped those Pollutions under which so many in the World groan; let us thank God: and let

SERM. let us remember that it is from hence that

VII. we are to begin our Race: that we have not
those Impediments which others have created to themselves by a long Course of wilful Sin; and that we have Incitements, and Encouragements from hence, as well as Obligation, to attempt the greater Heights of Religion and Virtue. By Religion here I do not mean Devotion, and Prayer; which yet are of admirable Use, and of great Necessity: but the greater Degrees of all that is good; the more sure Conquest over all our Passions; the more quiet Possession of our Souls in Patience; the more profound Submission to God's Will, and to all the Dispensations of his Providence; the more composed Resignation of our selves to his good Pleasure, the bringing down every Imagination which raiseth it self against him; the subduing every undue Tendency in us towards worldly Ambition, Honour, or Riches; the quieting every turbulent Motion in our Breasts; the taking off more and more the Edge of the Mind from all sensual Enjoyments; the Discovery, and gradual Amendment, of the least Dislocations, the least irregular Movements, the most secret Disorders of our Wills and

and Affections. This is the Task of a Christian, who is past the Danger of being immersed in open Vice and Profaneness: to go on from Strength to Strength; from one Degree to another; from one Branch of Perfection to another; till He is called for by God into a State of greater Perfection. And whoever will seriously look into themselves, will find Instances enough of Imperfection; in the amending of which they will shew a sincere Intention to please God, and give themselves a greater Hope of his Mercy than they could otherwise have.

BUT last of all, let none of us increase our own Misery by such a Baseness of Temper, as ungratefully to abuse the Mercy of God, offered us upon the *Terms* of the *Gospel*, to the Purposes of Sin and Wickedness. This is a Sin of a deep Hue; and what will indeed be the greatest Aggravation of our continuing in our Vices. God offers us, for the sake of his Son, to receive us to Favour, returning to him; and sincerely practising his whole Will for the future, without any Partiality, or Neglect of any part of it. It is a servile and ignominious Disposition, for which no Name is bad enough, to take occasion

SERM. cation from the Offer of Mercy to which
VII. universal Amendment and Holiness is at any
time entitled, to defer our Amendment and
Holiness. The only generous Way; the
only secure Way for our own Interest, (which
we pretend to be so dear to us;) is immedi-
ately and without Delay to endeavour to
come up to his *Terms*, that we may obtain
his Promises; to work out our Salvation
*while the Day lasteth: because the Night
cometh* (we know not how soon) *when no
Man can work*. Thus shall we find the
Way to *Eternal Life*, before it be hid from
our Eyes: which God grant we may! &c.



Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

S E R M O N V I I I.

HEBREWS x. 26, 27.

For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sin: but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries.



H A V E, in several Discourses, SERM.
shewn you, from plain and un- VIII.
contestible Passages of the *New*
Testament, what those *Terms*
and *Conditions* are, upon which *Almighty*
God will finally pardon, accept, and jus-
tify, those professed Christians, who have
been, in any Sense, or any Degree, *wil-*
ful Sinners: and in my last Discourse I
summ'd them up in that one Condition of
sincere,

SERM. *sincere, universal, and impartial Obedience*

VIII. to all the Laws of God, without Exception;
 or a real and sensible Amendment of their
 Lives and Tempers, in all those Instances, in
 which they know themselves to have trans-
 gressed any of his Commandments. In or-
 der still more to confirm the Truth of what
 hath been said upon this Subject, I design to
 consider particularly those several Schemes,
 and various Hopes, which the Imaginations
 of Men have framed to themselves, more
 agreeable to their own Humours, and Incl-
 inations; in Opposition to these settled Con-
 ditions of God's Favour.

BUT, before I set about this, it will be
 very proper to take notice of another sort of
 Mistake in this important Affair, equally
 contradictory to what I have already laid
 down; equally fatal to ill-disposed Minds;
 and very troublesome and afflictive to many
 well-meaning and honest Christians: and
 that is, the Opinion that their Case, as well
 as the Case of all professed Christians who
 have been at any time *wilful Sinners*, is so
 sad and desperate, that it is in vain for them
 to hope for Pardon and Reconciliation, up-
 on any Terms; even tho' they should hear-
 tily

tilly endeavour to come up to the *Conditions* SERM.
I have heretofore laid down. These are of VIII.
a differing sort, and of a differing Temper, 
from the most of their Neighbours. And
their Opinion is pretended to be founded
upon some *Texts* of the *New Testament*,
which seem to speak of the Irremissibleness
of some Sins, which perhaps they fancy
themselves to have been guilty of; and par-
ticularly upon this Passage, now read to you:
which, taken by it self, and separated from
the Context and manifest Scope of the Wri-
ter of this *Epistle*, seems to conclude, in ge-
neral, against all Hope of Pardon to such as
have sinned wilfully after the receiving and
professing the Christian Religion.

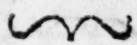
IN Opposition to such Imaginations,
(which render all that I have before advan-
ced of none effect) I shall not confine my
View to this one Text of the *New Testa-
ment*: but I shall have regard to several o-
thers, which have been in the same man-
ner, mistaken and misapplied; as well as to
some Considerations taken from the Nature
of God, and the End of the Gospel;
designing

I. To

SERM. I. To shew the great Absurdity of fixing
 VIII. upon Almighty God, or the Christian Religion, any such Opinion as that all Hope of Pardon is cut off in the *Gospel*, from Any *Christians* who have been *wilful Sinners*.
 And

II. To consider particularly the Intent of those mistaken Texts ; and the Impossibility of fairly fixing upon them any such Opinion as this.

AND these Points I think it very useful to explain. For tho' the Generality of professed Christians are more apt to presume upon the Goodness and Mercy of God ; and to interpret all Texts of Scripture concerning that, so much in their own Favour as to receive some Support from them, even whilst they wilfully continue in their Sins : yet, since there are, on one hand, some others, who may, from a pretended Despair of God's Mercy, go on to increase the Number of their Transgressions ; and, on the other hand, some weak, tho' honest, Christians, who have been brought to the melancholy Condition of thinking themselves, without any Ground, to be such sort of Sinners as have forfeited all Title to God's future

ture Mercy ; it is very necessary to consider SERM.
 this Point, that so the Uneasiness of the lat- VIII.
 ter, which is only their present Unhappiness; 
 and the Despair of the former, which is their
 Crime (as it is founded upon their Desire to
 continue in their Sins ;) may be removed ;
 and some Stop put to such destructive Ima-
 ginations. Nor can it be amiss for us to
 descend, as near as we can, to the Wants
 and Occasions of all sorts of Persons ; to
 consider the Scruples of some, as well as the
 Presumption of others ; and to accommodate
 our Teaching sometimes to the more rare
 and secret Cases, as well as at other times
 to the more known and common. Nay,
 it is indeed necessary, in order to place be-
 yond all reasonable Doubt what I have here-
 tofore laid down, to handle this Subject :
 that so it may appear, not only that the
Terms of God's Favour which I have point-
 ed out, are the only *Terms* upon which He
 hath promised Acceptance ; but that there
 is no reason to think but that all professed
 Christians may be sure of Acceptance, upon
 coming up to those *Terms*, whatsoever their
 former Condition hath been. To return,

M

I. I SHALL

SERM. I. I SHALL now endeavour to shew the
VIII. great Absurdity of fixing upon Almighty
~~~~~ God, and the Christian Religion, any such  
Opinion, as that before mentioned.

I. IT is extremely absurd to suppose that Almighty God, in condescending to make Terms with his Creatures, in the Christian Dispensation, should not propose some Method of Reconciliation to all those who sin after they have received that Religion, as well as to those who had been Sinners before their believing : because no Man, tho' never so hearty and sincere in his Profession of that Religion, is thereby made so infallible, that nothing shall ever impose upon his Judgment ; or so well-guarded and resolute as that nothing shall be able to surprize, or entice, his Will into a Consent to Sin, in any possible Instance. It may be true that a Christian hath such a Power, and so much Strength, and that He is so free from an absolute Necessity of committing any one single wilful Sin, that He may possibly, by Watchfulness, and Consideration, and a perpetual Care over himself, prevent this. But it is true likewise that this is so very difficult, that the Experience and Confession of all the best Men,  
in



in all Ages, have demonstrated that this sin- SERM.  
less Obedience was never performed in Fact. VIII.

THERE is indeed a vast difference, and   
in the Opinion of the World a greater some-  
times than is just, between Sins: which hath  
induced some Men perhaps to think them-  
selves more free from Sin than they really  
are. Some are apt to imagine, because they  
do not permit themselves to be guilty of  
Drunkenness, or Adultery, or Fornication,  
or Murther, or Covetousness, or Dishonesty  
in their Dealings, that therefore they are  
clean. But they often forget the Thoughts  
of Pride and Haughtiness; of Revenge and  
Implacability; of Severity and Ill-nature; of  
Envy and Malice; of Anger and Passio n;  
of Ambition and worldly Grandeur; the free-  
quent Misfence of their precious Time, and  
the like: in one, or more, of which, they  
have, some time or other, in some degree  
or other, too certainly, indulged themselves  
more than they can answer for at the Bar of  
Justice. Too certainly, I say: for, Is there  
a perfect Man upon Earth? Is there one,  
who hath not one weak Side? who hath been  
always so strictly upon his Guard as that He  
can say, He hath resisted all Temptations to  
M 2 every

SERM. every sort, and every degree of Sin? It hath  
VIII. been often observed to you, that Men are  
 too apt to pass over the Consideration of that particular Vice to which they have found themselves inclined; especially, if it be not of the Number of those which are called scandalous and notorious Crimes: Whereas some of these I have now mentioned, do in truth defile the Soul; hinder the Perfection of Virtue; render the Man as truly obnoxious to the Divine Anger; and as truly oppose the Design of Christianity, as some of the former sort; and therefore ought to be esteemed as Sins, and acknowledged as such by all Christians.

I BELIEVE, therefore, it may be truly affirmed that there neither is, nor ever was, a Christian who hath not, in some Instance or other, suffered himself to be carried beyond the Bounds of strict Religion, particularly of the Christian Institution; so as that He must acknowledge himself, to the great Judge of the World, and Knower of Hearts, to be, in some degree or other, a wilful Sinner after the Reception of Christianity. St. *Paul* indeed, after his Conversion to the Christian Religion, and his Labours in the  
Work

Work of the Gospel, doth say, that He is S E R M.  
conscious to himself of nothing for which V. 11.  
He can condemn himself, *1 Cor. iv. 4.* ~~~~~  
for that is the meaning of those Words, *I know nothing by myself.* But He doth not mean this in any other Sense, to be sure, but this, that in the main He had performed his Office after such a manner, as that He had good Ground to hope for the Favour of God, and the Rewards of Heaven: which Assurance, others likewise may arrive at. That He could intend by this to signify that, in any single Instance either of Thought, Word, or Deed; either consider'd as an *Apostle*, or as a private Christian; He had nothing to accuse himself of; is a Supposition without all Ground. For He doth not appear to have had such an Opinion of himself; and particularly seems to have acknowledged himself in an hasty and indecent Passion before the High-priest, *Acts xxiii. 3.* for the Words cannot be understood to mean less than that. Nor indeed doth He extend the Expression, *1 Cor. iv. 4.* to himself in all Capacities: but is there considering himself particularly as called to, and executing, the Work of an *Apostle*. St. Peter once thought it abso-  
M 3 lutely



S E R M. lately impossible that any worldly Consider-  
 VIII. ation could bring him to a Denial of his  
 ~~~~~ *Master*, after all the convincing Evidences,  
 to which He had been witness, of his being
 the true *Messiah*: and yet, the same Night
 in which He shewed this Confidence, He
 shewed his Weakness also.

THIS, therefore, being undoubtedly true,
 that no Christian, since the first preaching of
 the Gospel, hath actually so fulfilled the Law
 of Christ, as to be entirely free from all Sin
 either of *Omission*, or *Commission*; either in
 Thought, or Word, or Deed: I say, it is
 absurd to suppose that Almighty God would
 leave no room in such a Dispensation, for
 the Recovery and Reconciliation of wilful
 Sinners, after their believing the Gospel,
 without which there could be no Salvation
 obtained. This would be to bring Men into
 such a Dispensation as must only affright and
 terrify some, and throw others into a more
 profligate Course of Sin than they were in,
 before their believing in Christ. This is to
 suppose Almighty God calling the World
 solemnly to the Knowledge of the Gospel;
 descending to treat with his Creatures, in
 order to bestow his Mercy upon them after
 an

an extraordinary manner: and that the Ef- SERM.
fect of this Condescension is, that the fin- VIII.
cereſt Believer that ever embraced his Call to ~~~~~
the Chriſtian Faith, cannot have any Hopes
of Pardon, if He hath once after that wil-
fully tranſgreſſed any of his Laws. And
what is this but to publiſh a Religion to the
World, which hath no Effect towards ma-
king any of the Sons of Men happy; but
indeed, upon this Suppoſition, makes them
all much more miſerable, in the End, than
they would have been without it.

SOME Men have made it a great Objec-
tion againſt the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of
God, that he ſhould promulgate, after ſuch
a manner, ſuch a Religion as that of Jeſus
Chriſt; when He foreſaw that ſo many, who
have it in their Power to do otherwiſe,
would live ſo unworthily of it, in the Prac-
tice of groſs, and notorious Sins. But the
Love of God, in answer to this Objection,
is ſufficiently ſeen in the unſpeakable Benefit
which the better ſort receive from this Inſti-
tution; and in the Proof which that affords
us that others might receive the ſame, were
they not extremely wanting to themſelves.
But the preſent Suppoſition takes away all
Hopes, even from the moſt ſincere Believer,

SERM. of acquitting himself so as to obtain God's
VIII. Favour at last. For the Weakness of all

Christians, in some Instance or other, proving such a Difficulty of absolute Perfection, as no Christian ever yet conquered; this Supposition represents Almighty God as instituting a Religion entirely fruitless and ineffectual. Which is so great an Absurdity, that from hence it may certainly be concluded that there is a Method of Pardon and Reconciliation for those who have wilfully sinned after their receiving the Christian Religion. And this with respect to all sorts of wilful Sinners in that Religion: because, as it is absurd to suppose that God should not mean and speak Consolation to the better sort of Christians; so, on the other hand, it is equally absurd to suppose that He should, by cutting off all Hopes of Favour on any Terms, urge and force the worse sort of Christians into a more resolute and uninterrupted Prosecution of their Vices. And this brings me to another Consideration, *viz.*

2. THAT, as the contrary Opinion, is, in it self, absurd and shocking: so, it is expressly contrary to the declared Design of the Gospel: which is, that all Sinners should be called

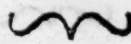
called and invited to Repentance and Reformation; and that Virtue should have an Encouragement annexed to it, sufficient to work upon Men to forsake Vice, and return to the Practice of their Duty. But now, this End could not possibly be answered, if it were certain that, if once men arrived to such a Pitch of Wickedness, they should never be accepted by Almighty God, even tho' they should forsake it for the Time to come. For, as I observed in a former Discourse, the Certainty of this, nay, the probable Suspicion of this, would incline all Sinners, especially habitual Sinners, to strengthen themselves in their Sins; and to take Courage from their Despair of Mercy, or of any other sort of Happiness, to take as much as they possibly could of the Pleasures of a Course of all manner of Sin; and so to engage themselves, more inextricably than ever, in a vicious Habit of Life.

BUT because some have built so pernicious an Opinion, not upon the Reasonableness of the thing it self; or upon the main End and Design of Christianity; but upon some particular Texts and Passages of the *New Testament*; and argued from them,
against

SERM, against the Acceptance of some Sinners, who
 VIII. are professed Christians, upon any Terms
 ~~~~~ whatsoever : I shall now therefore, in order  
 to remedy the Mischief of such a Mistake,

II. ENDEAVOUR to shew that these  
 Passages of the *New Testament* prove not  
 the Point, for which they are alledged. And  
 of these Passages I shall take particular No-  
 tice of *Three*; upon which the whole of  
 the present Debate entirely depends.

I. THE *first* is that Passage, recorded in  
 the *Gospels*, in which our Saviour speaks of  
*sinning against the Holy Ghost*; and de-  
 clares it unpardonable; particularly, *Matth.*  
*xii. 31, 32.* which some well-meaning  
 Christians have been so unkind to them-  
 selves, as in their desponding Minutes, to  
 apply to their own Case. The particular  
 handling all the Circumstances of this im-  
 portant Passage would require a long Dis-  
 course on purpose. But all that is necessary  
 to my present Design is to shew that the Sin  
 there spoken of, is a Sin in which such Per-  
 sons as we are now speaking of, cannot  
 possibly be concerned. For whatever it was  
 that was there intended by our Lord; this  
 is manifest, that He speaks to, and of, such  
 Persons

Persons as themselves saw the Course and SERM.  
 Series of his wonderful Works ; and did, VIII.  
 out of mere Malice, and an incorrigible   
 Disposition of Mind, ascribe all that He did  
 to the Power of evil Spirits: tho' there was not  
 the least Sign of that, but manifest Demon-  
 stration that He was acting directly against the  
 Interest of all evil Spirits. It is upon this  
 Occasion, and of such sort of Sinners, that  
 He there speaks. And from hence it appears  
 that, whatever the Nature and Malignity of  
 that Sin was, it cannot be a Sin which it is  
 possible for any Persons to commit, who  
 profess Faith in Jesus Christ, and believe  
 Him to have been sent into the World by  
 God ; nay, nor for any who did not them-  
 selves see with their own Eyes his mighty  
 Works, and, out of mere Malice and Per-  
 verseness, ascribe them to the Devil. It  
 follows, therefore, that, supposing the *Sin*  
*against the Holy Ghost* (whatever be the full  
 Nature of it) to be unpardonable ; (which  
 probably must arise from the perverse Dispo-  
 sition of Mind from which it proceeds, un-  
 capable of Alteration for the better, and not  
 from any Resolution of Almighty God never  
 to pardon it upon such Alteration for the  
 better ;)



SER.M. better;) supposing, I say, this Sin unpardon-  
 VIII. nable: yet it follows from what hath been  
 said, that, notwithstanding this, the wilful  
 Sins of all who profess Faith in Jesus Christ  
 may be pardoned, upon some Terms; and  
 that they may be capable of coming up to  
 those Terms. For it appears that no pro-  
 fessed Christian, or sincere Believer in *Jesus*  
*Christ*, is capable of being guilty of this Sin:  
 and it is of *Christians*, who have been, or  
 are, wilful Sinners, that we are now dis-  
 coursing. This is fully sufficient for our  
 present Purpose, concerning this Passage a-  
 bout *sinning against the Holy Ghost*, viz.  
 That professed Christians are not, and can-  
 not be, concerned in it.

2. THE second Passage I shall mention,  
 is that in the *Sixth* Chapter of the *Epistle* to  
 the *Hebrews*, from ver. 4. to ver. 7. For it  
*is impossible for those who were once enlight-*  
*ened, and have tasted the heavenly Gift,*  
*and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghost,*  
*and have tasted the good Word of God, and*  
*the Powers of the World to come, if they*  
*shall fall away, to renew them again to Re-*  
*pentance: seeing they crucify to themselves*  
*the Son of God afresh, and put him to an*

open Shame ; concerning which *Passage*, I <sup>SERM.</sup>  
have the following Observations to offer. <sup>VIII.</sup>

I. THIS is spoken only of a wilful and open Apostacy from the Faith of Christ, and a public Denial of Jesus Christ, persisted in for some Time : and this Apostacy is the Apostacy of such Persons as had tasted and, been endowed with some of the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost, seen in those first Days ; and had been witnesses to the great and wonderful Gifts which others in the Church likewise enjoyed, and to all the Wonders of the *Gospel-Age*, called here by a Jewish Phrase, *the World*, or Age, *to come*. These are the Persons, and this is the falling away, here spoken of : and such a falling away it is, as may justly be said to be, in effect, an Acquittance of those who crucified our Lord : and a joining with the Infidel World in bringing a publick Shame upon Him, and his Religion. This then is vastly different from the Case of any who are still professed Christians ; and cannot possibly be applied to any, who have not, by open Apostacy, fallen from a State of such Gifts, and such Powers, and such Illuminations.

SERM.

VIII.

2. THE Impossibility of the Acceptance of such Persons is not here fixed upon any Resolution, on the part of Almighty God, not to accept them ; should they again sincerely turn to Him and come up to his Terms : but it is declared to arise from the Impossibility of such Persons ever recovering themselves, so as to come up to the Terms of the Gospel. It is said to be impossible to *renew them to Repentance* : not to be impossible for them to be pardoned and accepted, supposing them to come to true Repentance. But we are now speaking of the Pardon of such professed Christians, tho' never so notorious Sinners, as may, and do, come up to the Terms required : and this Passage, you see, cannot be meant of Sinners, during their Christian Profession ; or of Sinners of any sort, who do at any time come up to the *Terms* offered in the Gospel. But then,

3. THE *Impossibility* here spoken of, is not a natural or absolute Impossibility : but only a very great Difficulty ; which in the ordinary way of speaking, is often said to be impossible ; and represented by Similitudes taken from natural Impossibilities. At this Day, we our selves often call a difficult Matter,



Matter, an impossible thing; without mean- SER M.  
 ning it in the strict and accurate Sense of the VIII.  
 Word: and in the Eastern Nations, their  
 Ways of speaking were much more exor-  
 bitant, and their Figures of Speech more  
 strange, than those amongst us. *Can the*  
*Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard*  
*his Spots?* saith the Prophet, Jer. xiii. 23.  
*then shall ye also who are accustomed to do*  
*evil, learn to do well.* If one were here to  
 follow the *Letter* of the Expression, one  
 would think that the *Prophet* was represent-  
 ing it to be as impossible, in the nature of  
 the thing, for the habitual Sinner to turn to  
 the Practice of Virtue, as it is for the *Black-*  
*moor* to alter the Colour of his Body. Where-  
 as it is manifest that this could not be in-  
 tended, because it was the same Prophet's  
 Business and Design, (as it was that of o-  
 thers also) to persuade those very Sinners,  
 to whom He speaks, to reform their Ways:  
 which certainly was the absurdest Thing  
 imaginable, supposing it a Matter which He  
 knew, and represented to them, to be abso-  
 lutely impossible.

THUS our Saviour himself represents the  
 Difficulty of a Rich Man's embracing the  
 Gospel,

SERM. Gospel, and arriving safe at the Place of future Rewards, (a Difficulty arising from the strong Temptations there are in the Possession of Riches, to Covetousness, or Pride, or Luxury;) by a Similitude taken from a thing absolutely impossible: and goeth so high, in the figurative way of speaking, as to say, *It is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, Matth. xix. 24. And yet his great Design was to call these rich Men themselves to such an use of their Riches, as that they might prove the Occasion of their greater Reward hereafter. Which shews that it was not his Intent, in those Words, to speak literally; or to signify any more than his Sense of the very great Difficulty of rich Men's behaving themselves so here, as to attain Eternal Happiness hereafter.

FROM all this it appears that Things are, in Scripture, said, or represented, to be impossible, by an usual manner of speaking, which are only extremely difficult: and consequently, that the Word *impossible*, in the Passage now under Consideration, (taking into the Account likewise the nature of the thing

thing spoken of, doth not signify any more; S E R M.  
 and that the *Apostle's* Design in that *Passage* VIII.  
 was no other than to signify the extreme Difficulty of the true Repentance of such as do  
 totally renounce the Christian Faith, and  
 publickly disown their Master, Jesus Christ,  
 after they have received themselves, and seen  
 in others, the greatest and most miraculous  
 Proofs that he is the true *Messiah*.

AND thus we see that, whether we consider the Persons concerned in this Passage; or the thing affirmed of them in it; it hath no reference to the Sins of professed Christians, continuing such; and doth not prove any thing of the Impossibility of their Repentance, and Acceptance.

3. THE *third* and last *Passage* of the *New Testament* which I shall mention, as quoted, and applied, by some, to the same purpose, is that which I read to you, at the Entrance of this Discourse, out of the same *Epistle* to the *Hebrews*, ch. x. ver. 26, 27.  
*For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and*  
 N fiery



SERM. *fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Ad-*  
VIII. *versaries.* Now,



I. To put such an Interpretation upon this Passage, as to take away all Hopes of Pardon, from such professed Christians as have been, in any degree, wilful Sinners, even supposing them to return and amend; is to contradict the main Design and Tenour of the Gospel: as I have just now shewed. And whatever contradicts the main Design of the Gospel, cannot possibly be the true meaning of any particular Passage in it: whether we be able to find out the exact meaning of the Passage, or not. The Form of Expression, upon which the Supposition is founded, equally precludes from Mercy the sincerest repenting Christian, who hath once wilfully transgressed God's Law, and the *vilest* Sinner who is hardened in his Iniquities. So that, if it excludes any Sinner from Pardon; it excludes *all* who ever once sinned. And who can put such a Sense upon this Passage, as will render vain the whole Christian Dispensation; and debarr every one, who ever named the Name of Christ, from all Title to any Benefit from Him? This it is impossible to conceive, or embrace, as the Intent of the

the Apostle. And as for the true Intent SERM.  
of it, VIII.

2. IT will be obvious, I believe, to every   
one's Observation, upon the reading the  
whole Context, that this *sinning wilfully*,  
in ver. 26. is the total and open forsaking the  
Christian Assemblies, in the Verse before:  
which was accounted a renouncing and be-  
ing ashamed of, the Christian Faith, in Com-  
pliance with the Infidel World about them.  
And that this *sinning wilfully*, here spoken  
of, is to be understood of a publick Renun-  
ciation of Christianity, and Apostacy from  
the Gospel, seems plain from the 29th Verse  
in which the *wilful Sinner*, mentioned here,  
is opposed to one amongst the *Jews that*  
*despised Moses's Law*, and professedly op-  
posed it; and is farther described to be one  
who hath *trodden under Foot the Son of God*,  
*and hath counted the Blood of the Covenant*,  
*wherewith He was sanctified*, *an unboly*  
*thing*, *and hath done Despite unto the Spi-*  
*rit of Grace*: Phrases, very like to those by  
which the *Author* of this *Epistle* describes  
an open Apostacy from the Christian Faith,  
in the *Passage* which I last considered; and  
which cannot agree so well to any other

SERM. sort of wilful Sins, as to that of a Depart-  
 VIII. ture from the Profession of Christianity, and,  
 as much as in Men lies, giving an open  
 Affront to that Dispensation, and bringing a  
 publick Disgrace upon it. So that the *wilful Sinners*, here spoken of, are not the *wilful Sinners*, of whom we are now treating; *viz.* those who are so, at any time, during their Profession of Christianity.

3. WHAT is affirmed of these Sinners, in the *Passage* now before us, is that *there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sin*: that is, either that the Force of *Christ's* Sacrifice signifieth nothing to such as have renounced his Religion: or that there is no other Sacrifice of any Force, besides that which they have renounced; which cannot profit them, whilst it is publicly renounced by them. But certainly this is said of them, considered as continuing in their Apostacy; and not as returning sincerely again to their former Profession. And this indeed may be said of any wilful habitual Sinners, continuing such, that the Sacrifice of Christ will profit them nothing: but this, without taking from them the Hope of the Favour of God, upon the Altera-



Alteration of their Lives, and their coming SERM.  
up to his Terms. VIII.

It appears, therefore, I think, very plainly, that the Persons here spoken of, are not *wilful Sinners*, who are such, during their open Profession of *Christianity*; and that, supposing the thing here affirmed, to be affirmed of all *wilful Sinners* in general, it is not an utter Exclusion of any of them from all Hopes, but as remaining in their Sins: and consequently, that this *Passage* proves nothing against the Possibility of *wilful Sinners*, of all Degrees, amongst such as profess Christianity, obtaining the Favour of God, upon the Terms appointed by Himself in the Gospel: *viz.* the forsaking what is evil; and the sincere, universal Amendment of their Lives, in all those Instances, in which they can discover themselves to have been formerly sinful, or defective.

AND it being so evident, from what I have heretofore discoursed, that these are the only Conditions of their final Justification, and Acceptance; and so plain from what I have now said, that, upon their coming up to these Conditions, they need not doubt of that Justification and Acceptance: what re-  
N 3 mains,

SERM. mains, but that we all shake off every Pre-  
VIII. tence of Despair and Despondency, on the  
one hand; and every vain Hope and fruit-  
less Expectation, on the other; and heartily  
set our selves to amend whatever is amiss in  
our Tempers, or Practice; to run our Chri-  
stian Race in that Path which *Christ* him-  
self hath marked out to us; and, *by pati-  
ent continuance in well-doing, to seek after  
Glory and Immortality?* Which God grant  
we may all obtain, for the Sake of his Son  
*Jesus Christ*, our Lord!



*The Mistake, of relying upon Faith, considered, &c.*

# S E R M O N IX.

*EPHESIANS* ii. 8.

*For by Grace are you saved, through Faith;  
and that not of your selves : it is the  
Gift of God.*



Now come to the *Second part* SERM.  
of that *Design*, which I have, IX.  
for some Time, had in View ;  
*viz.* to examine particularly  
the principal of those false Pretences, and  
mistaken Notions, concerning the *Terms*  
of our Acceptance with God, by which  
Men support themselves in their Continu-  
ance in their beloved Vices ; and endeavour  
to elude the Force, and arm themselves a-  
gainst the Power, of those plain Texts of  
*Scripture*, and those convincing Arguments,



SERM. by which I have already proved that the  
 IX. Method laid down in the Christian Religion,  
 by which Sinners may hope to be reconciled  
 to *God*, thro' *Jesus Christ*, is the actual  
 Amendment of their Lives and Tempers in  
 all such Instances as they know to be con-  
 trary, in any respect, to the Law of God ;  
 and that this is indispensably required of  
 them in order to their final Justification at  
 the great Day of the Lord.

THE *first* of these Mistakes which I shall  
 take notice of, and examine, is the Mistake  
 of those Men who appear to be induced,  
 by some Texts of the *New Testament*, to  
 rely upon *Faith*, or their believing in *Jesus*  
*Christ*, and confident Application of his  
 Merits to themselves ; and to expect Salva-  
 tion from this, considered as distinct, and  
 separate, from Obedience to the Moral Laws  
 of the *Gospel*. And amongst the rest, the  
 Text which I have now read to you, hath  
 been often heretofore, and is very likely to  
 be often again, alledged to this Purpose, by  
 Men who are thus disposed to lay hold on  
 any thing rather than heartily to set about  
 the uneasy Task of reforming what is amiss  
 in

in themselves. In the Examination of this SERMO  
great and fatal Mistake, I design

IX.

I. To lay before you the plain meaning  
of St. *Paul* in the Text.

II. To shew that no such Pretence as this  
can fairly be built upon these, or any the  
like Words in the *New Testament*.

III. To observe that St. *Paul*, doth, in  
this very Epistle, as well as in many other  
Places, sufficiently declare against any such  
Pretence: as our *blessed Lord* did likewise  
before Him in the plainest Words.

IV. To shew you in what Sense, *Faith*,  
or believing the *Gospel*, is said to save us.

I. It will be very proper to lay before  
you the plain meaning of St. *Paul* in the  
*Text*.

AND, if you look into the *Chapter*, you  
will find that He is there speaking of the for-  
mer Condition in which the *Ephesians* were,  
before their Conversion from a State of Hea-  
thenism, to the Belief of the *Gospel*; and  
magnifying God's Mercy, and the exceeding  
Riches of his Grace, or Favour, towards  
them, from the *first* Verse to the *eighth*:  
in which He therefore goes on to make them  
sensible of their Obligation to that God who  
had

SERM. had thus *quicken'd* them *who were dead in*

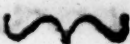
IX. *sins. For by Grace are ye saved: that is,*  
 *For it is very fit you should know and consider that it is by the mere Grace and Favour, or Mercy of God (as the Word signifies) that ye are saved through Faith; that ye are put into a Method, and State of Safety and Salvation, by means of your receiving the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is his own Act, his mere Mercy, that you have Terms of Acceptance offered you, upon your believing in Christ. The being saved in this Method is by the Grace or Mercy of God, I say; not of your selves, that is, no Contrivance, or Appointment of your own; not owing to your selves: but it is the Gift, the free Contrivance, and Offer of God to you, that you should be put into this happy State by the Gospel. This is the meaning of the Expression, and that not of your selves; not, as it may sound in our Translation, and that Faith or believing, not of your selves, but entirely the Gift of God; (for the Word That in the Greek is of the Neuter Gender, and so cannot so easily be supposed to relate to the Word Faith going before:) but, that, or this whole Matter, this your being*



being *saved by Faith*; this being called into SERM.  
a State of Salvation by the Gospel, is *not* IX.  
*of your selves* but the Gift, the Favour,   
the Offer of God, previous to all Design, and  
Thought of your own. Then follow these  
Words, *ver. 9. Not of Works, lest any Man*  
*should boast*, i. e. And as the Proposal of  
this gracious Method of Salvation was not  
owing to your selves, and your Contrivance:  
so neither was such a Favour merited at the  
Hands of God by any past Perfection, by any  
good Behaviour of your own, preceding it.  
For, as I told you already, *v. 1. and 5. you*  
*were dead in Trespasses and Sins*, when you  
were called to the Knowledge of this merci-  
ful Dispensation. And this I add, lest any  
of you should boast, as if you had deserved  
of the Hands of Almighty God, by your past  
good Behaviour, so merciful a Dispensation,  
so gracious a Proposal, as is made to you  
in the Gospel. Then he goes on to assure  
them farther that their happy Condition is  
owing entirely to God, who had, without  
any Contrivance or Desert of theirs, ordered  
Affairs so by his good Providence, that they  
were now Believers in *Jesus Christ*; and  
had

SERM. had the Offers of Salvation, upon the Terms  
IX. of the Gospel, brought home to them.

W THIS, therefore, is the manifest Design of the Apostle in the Text, to raise the Gratitude of the *Ephesians* to *Almighty God*; and to inspire them with all possible Regard to Him; by putting them in mind that they were formerly in an helpless and miserable Condition, *dead in Sins*, void of the true Life of reasonable Creatures; that they had no Thought themselves of such Salvation as had been offered them by the Christian Religion; that they had no Merit to engage God Almighty to make them such an Offer, and preach such a State of Reconciliation and Salvation to them; that it was of his *Grace*, or Favour, that they were *saved* from their former evil Condition of Sin and Ignorance, by believing and receiving the Gospel: for which they were obliged therefore to magnify the exceeding Riches of God's Mercy towards them in Christ; and not to attribute this Happiness to themselves, who were before this void of every thing that could be pleasing to Almighty God, or influence him to shew them so great and remarkable a Kindness. It is by *Grace* that ye are delivered

vered from your former miserable Condi- S E R M.  
tion ; it is an Act of Grace that *ye are saved* IX.  
*thro' Faith*, or put into a State of Salvation   
by believing the Gospel : and this being *saved*  
in this Method, and by means of this be-  
lieving, is *not of your selves* ; but wholly  
owing to the good Will of God, whose free  
Offer, and Gift it is. This being so mani-  
festly the Intent of the Apostle in this Place ;  
it appears from hence what I proposed in the  
second place, *viz.*

II. THAT no such Pretence as that which  
makes Faith alone, separated from a good  
Life and Conversation, the Condition on  
which we shall be accepted at last ; that no  
such Pretence as this, I say, can be built  
upon this Passage of the *New Testament* :  
which will lead us likewise to the farther  
Consideration of this Mistake ; and to give  
a true Account of what St. *James* and St.  
*Paul*, upon other Occasions, have affirmed  
upon this Subject.

As for the Passage now before us ; we  
have seen already that by our being saved by,  
or thro' Faith, is meant our being put into  
the true Way of Salvation by believing in  
Jesus Christ : and therefore that it cannot be  
laid



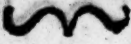
SERM. laid upon any such Expression as this, that it  
 IX. is this Faith or believing taken by it self, and  
 considered without any Influence upon our  
 Lives, that will at last be accepted by God ;  
 if we had Opportunity of practising Righte-  
 ousness, and have refused to do it. Besides,  
 every thing necessary to Salvation must be  
 represented as the Method that leads to it :  
 and because Faith in Christ, believing in  
 Him, and receiving Him for our Master, is  
 one and the first Requisite ; therefore we  
 may be said to be saved by *Faith*, without  
 any such meaning as that other Things may  
 not be as necessary, and as indispensable, as  
 that.

BUT here it may be said, Doth not St.  
*Paul* expressly in another place attribute Jus-  
 tification to *Faith* without the Works of the  
 Law ? *Gal.* iii. 6, 11. To which I answer,  
 Doth not St. *James* in his *Epistle*, ch. ii.  
 14. expressly combat that Opinion which  
 some Men may falsely build upon this, viz.  
 that *Faith*, without Moral Works conse-  
 quent upon it, is sufficient to Salvation ? And  
 is not St. *James's* *Epistle* of Authority with  
 Christians, as well as St. *Paul's* ? And is not  
 this a Demonstration to all who acknow-  
 ledge

ledge this, that St. *Paul* could not intend SERM.  
any such thing as some have fathered upon IX.  
Him ? But this is not all that is to be said.   
For it is manifest that St. *Paul* is there speaking of such Works of the Law, as Circumcision ; and arguing, that such are not necessary, from *Abraham's* being justified by the eminent Faith which He had before Circumcision : and this against some Persons who would still pretend that the Observation of such Things was necessary to the Favour of God. Add to this, that St. *Paul* uses the Word Faith for the Gospel-Dispensation preached by Jesus Christ ; and is only arguing that That is sufficient without the Observation of the Mosaical Ceremonies. But He is never arguing with design to make Men believe that a mere empty Faith, void of good Works, the Works of Righteousness, can save any Man at last : but faith much to the contrary in all his Epistles. But with respect to what is said both by *Him* and St. *James*, concerning the Faith and Justification of *Abraham* and of *Christians* ; it may be proper to observe as follows :

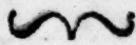
1. ST. *Paul* faith that *Abraham* was justified without, and before, such Works as  
Circum-

SERM. *Circumcision.* St. *James* saith that *Abraham*

IX. was not justified by an empty Faith without  
 Works of Obedience ; and would never have been excepted of God, unless He had shewn the reality of his Faith by Obedience to the Call and Command of God. Here is no Contradiction between them. So likewise *Christians* will be justified by means of believing the Gospel-Dispensation, without any such Works as Circumcision, or any other Works of the Ceremonial Law ; as St. *Paul* argued : But they will never be justified, and finally acquitted by any Belief in Christ, without bringing forth, as they have Opportunity, such good Fruits, and walking in such good Works, as the Gospel of Christ directs, and commands them to practise ; as St. *James* saith. Again,

2. *ABRAHAM* was, for one signal Act of Faith and Trust in God, called by Him *righteous* ; taken for such, and reputed as a Person free from the Guilt of his past Sins : as saith St. *Paul*. But it is manifest, saith St. *James*, that this Faith of *Abraham* was not such an empty Faith as some Christians pretend to rely upon : nay, that He would not have been justified finally by  
 God,



God, unless He had, when He was tried by SERM.  
God, shewn by the Obedience of his Life, IX.  
that his Faith was real, and sincere. Nei-   
ther in this is there any Contradiction be-  
tween them. So likewise it is true that a  
Christian, upon his first believing the Gospel,  
and receiving Jesus Christ as the Messiah and  
Saviour of the World, is acquitted from the  
Guilt of his past Sins ; and reputed at this  
time, and for the sake of this *Faith*, as a just  
and righteous Person, clear from all past  
Guilt : as St. *Paul* always taught the first  
Christians, who were converted at ripe  
Years from a Life of Infidelity and Sin. And  
so likewise it is true that no Christian who  
hath Opportunity, after his Conversion, to  
practise Holiness, and yet continues unfruit-  
ful, or wicked ; that no such Christian, I  
say, shall be finally justified and acquitted,  
at the last Day, for the sake of his believing  
in Christ ; as St. *James* teacheth : but that  
the final Justification of such Christians de-  
pends upon their shewing their Faith by their  
Works, as St. *James* expresseth it ; and up-  
on their bringing forth good Fruit in their  
Lives and Conversations.

O

THUS

SERM. THUS may it easily be seen that these  
 IX. *Two Apostles* perfectly agree concerning the  
 ~~~~~ Necessity of a good Life, and of every  
 Branch of the Law of Virtue. But St. *Paul*
 had to deal with a sort of Jewish Christians,
 who retained an Affection for the Works of
 the Law, and Circumcision particularly: and
 therefore found occasion to tell them that
 their Father *Abraham* himself was justified
 without such Works; that his eminent Faith
 was one time counted to him for Righte-
 ousness, or Justification; that for the sake
 of that Faith He was esteemed by God free
 from all the Guilt He had contracted^o by Sin
 before that Time; and that therefore it was
 nothing but what was agreeable to that great
 Example which they pretended to love and
 honour, that God should accept such as be-
 lieved in his Son Jesus Christ, without their
 adhering to such Works as Circumcision;
 and for the sake of that Faith in Reward,
 and for Encouragement, of it; should ac-
 quit them from the Guilt of all their Sins
 committed before that Time. But St. *James*
 found that some misunderstood and pervert-
 ed such Doctrine as this: and that some Chri-
 stians began to pretend that no Works at all,

not those of Piety, and Charity, were necessary to their Justification at the great Day; and that their believing in Christ would acquit them from the Guilt of all their Sins that they should commit after this Belief, and during the Time of their Christian Profession. And therefore He found it necessary to tell them, that *Abraham* shewed his Obedience to God's Will in the highest Instances, and trusted not in an empty *Faith*; but, tho' He had been once acquitted from past Sins by an eminent Degree of it, yet that he did not expect to continue in Favour with God, unless by obeying all his Commands, and shewing himself ready to fulfil his whole Will; and so likewise that *Christians* cannot expect to continue in the Favour of God, or that State of Justification and Acceptance which their first believing put them into, without imitating *Abraham's* Obedience, and following his Steps in good Works, as we'l as in Faith; or rather, that there can be no such thing as true Faith without good Works, any more than there can be a good Tree without good Fruit.

THESE were the different Reasons for the different, tho' not contradictory, *Posi-*

SERM. *tions* of these Two *Apostles* ; and for their
IX. different manner of handling this Point.

And in this Matter great Account is to be had of the following Distinction ; that believing in Jesus Christ acquits from the Guilt of Sins committed before such Belief ; and this merely in order to a better Life for the future ; which was St. *Paul's* frequent Affirmation : but that believing in Jesus Christ doth not acquit from the Guilt of any Sins continued in, after this Belief, and during our Christian Profession, but indeed add to it extremely, as St. *James* in effect affirms ; and as St. *Paul* often taught. Which will appear more plainly from what will be said under the Third Proposition, *viz.*

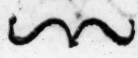
3. THAT St. *Paul* doth, in this very Epistle, as well as in many other places, sufficiently declare against any such Pretence as that which I have been now examining : and this in Imitation of his great Master who did the same before him. Our Lord, you cannot but remember, set himself against this very Deceit, by which He foresaw that many of his professed Disciples would endeavour to elude the great Design of his coming into the World. The Words you have often had

in your Ears, *Not every one that saith unto* S E R M.
me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom IX.
of Heaven : but He that doth the Will of
my Father which is in Heaven : a Declara-
tion which, in other Words, expresseth this
very thing, that it is not believing in Him,
or acknowledging him for our Master, or
applying his Comforts to our selves, that
shall avail us at last ; but the *doing the Will*
of his Father ; or a constant universal Obe-
dience to the Commands laid upon us in his
Gospel. This I repeat to you, under this
Head, because it is so express a Declaration
against Men's relying on *Faith* only for Sal-
vation, or final Justification ; that a more
express one could not have been made in
Words.

AFTER having remarked this, I come
to shew that St. *Paul* himself guards against
the same fatal Mistake in this very Epistle,
in which He declares that *We are saved*
through Faith. He doth indeed profess to
the *Ephesians*, ch. i. ver. 9. that their being
in so happy a State came not *of their Works :*
but that is meant of their Works before
their Conversion ; that they had no Merit to
invite or induce Almighty God to offer them

S E R M. such Salvation. But in the very next Words,

IX. ver. 10. He declares that we Christians are

 *God's Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works*; that we are, by Conversion to Christianity, as it were a-new created by the Will of God, calling us to it; and created for this End, that we may perform good Works. So that you see He immediately guards against any such Notion, as they might weakly entertain, of his attributing our final Salvation to Faith separated from good Works, in the Gospel Sense of good Works. And indeed, tho' in some Places *St. Paul* doth vilify the Merits of the World and their Behaviour, before the coming of the Gospel; and tho' in others He vilifies the Works of the *Law of Moses*, with which some would have burthened the Evangelical Profession: yet no one can shew any one Text, or any one single Passage, in which He vilifies, and sets at nought, the Works of Evangelical Righteousness, or Obedience to the Moral Laws of Virtue.

To vilify and decry the Behaviour and Works both of *Jew* and *Gentile*, before the Faith of Christ prevailed, was not to set at nought *good Works*, but bad ones; and only

to

to observe the corrupt and sad Estate of Man-
kind. To vilify the *Ceremonial Law*, after
the coming in of Justification by *Faith* (or
the *Gospel*) was not to vilify such Works as
we are speaking of: but indeed to take Men's
Minds off from Shadows and Ceremonies;
and to fix them upon good Works that are
more substantial. Nay, when He ever
toucheth upon the Moral Duties; with
how much Vehemence doth He recommend
them? When He speaks of the *Ephesians*, or
other Christians, having improved in Virtue,
since their Conversion to Christianity; what
Commendations doth He give them? And
with how much Joy doth He offer up his
Thanks to God for it? But we never find
him depressing that sort of Works; or set-
ting up *Faith* against them; or taking off
the bent of Men's minds from them: but
pressing them into the love and practice of
them with all the Earnestness possible. And
then, if He mentions the Sins of any professed
Christians; doth He do it, as if He thought
their Faith would avail them? Or rather, doth
He not do it with such a Spirit and Zeal a-
gainst them, as if no Words were bad enough
for them? And yet they had an easy Reply

SERM. to make to Him, had He taught them any
 IX. such Doctrine, as that a strong Faith would
 ~~~~~ save them at last, tho' separate from good  
 Works.

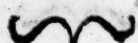
BUT particularly, in this Epistle, how many Moral Duties and good Works doth He press upon the *Ephesians*? And how solemnly doth He assure them, *ch. v. 5, 6*, that the Immoralities there mentioned will exclude all, who are guilty of them, from Heaven? And adds, *Let no Man deceive you with vain Words: for because of these Things the Wrath of God cometh upon the Children of Disobedience.* He puts them in mind, *ver. 8.* that they were sometimes *Darkness*; but now *Light in the Lord: walk as Children of the Light.* For the *Fruit of the Spirit is in all Goodness, and Righteousness, and Truth*, *ver. 9.* and so on. Doth all this, and an hundred times more of the same sort, that might be urged from his Writings: Doth all this look like the Doctrine of a Man who taught them that *Faith*, without Goodness and Virtue, would save them at last? Or rather, Is not all this plainly inconsistent with that Supposition? And doth it not all shew that it is impossible He should intend

intend to teach any such Doctrine ; however S E R M.  
his Words may sound at first hearing. IX.

I MENTION not here, what I have often mentioned upon the like Occasion, that it is contradictory to the declared Design of the Christian Religion to suppose any such thing as this. For if the mere believing in Christ shall save us at last ; tho' during that Belief we have wilfully persisted in Disobedience to his Commands : then is it not true that He came to *call Sinners to Repentance* ; then is it not true that the *Grace of God hath appeared to Men in the Gospel, teaching us to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World* ; then is it not true that our Lord expects us to bring forth Fruit ; or to be prepared for his coming by good Works ; or that He will judge us according to what we have done, whether it be good or evil. But on the contrary, these Things are true ; and most expressly, and positively asserted in the New Testament : and consequently it cannot be true that Faith, without good Works, will save us at last : nor can any thing be true, that takes away the  
absolute



SERM. absolute Necessity of an holy, and virtuous  
IX. Conversation.



BUT now, after I have thus guarded against that bad and pernicious Sense in which any Christians may understand some Expressions of Holy Scripture concerning our being *saved by*, or through, *Faith*; it is time,

4. To consider a little in what Sense it is that Christians may be said *to be saved by Faith*, or by believing in Jesus Christ. And

1. THIS may be well said of Them, because it is their Faith, or believing, which saves them from the Guilt of all their Sins committed before this Faith: a Privilege which peculiarly belonged to the first Christians converted, at Years of Discretion, from a Life of Sin and Impurity. And therefore, this first Justification is often spoken of by St. *Paul* in his Epistles, and attributed to Faith. But this doth not concern those who have been educated, and instructed, in the Knowledge of the Christian Religion. The guilty Sinner in those Days knew not whither to fly from the Guilt of his Sins, till his Belief entitled him to this Favour; which God had annexed to it, and the Apostles always promised in his name.

2. WE

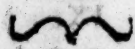
2. WE may be well said to be *saved* SERM. *through Faith*, because it is by believing in IX.  
Jesus Christ, that we come to know and embrace those Terms which are offered by God for our Salvation and Happiness. He came to save us; and by closing in with his Proposals we must be saved: and this we cannot do, without believing Him to be sent of God, and receiving him as such. This, therefore, being absolutely necessary; we may well find Salvation attributed to this, which is the first moving Principle towards it; and without which we should not go one Step forward in that Way to Salvation which He came to point out to us. *He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life*; and without knowing him, and believing in him, how should we know the Way, or the Path, to that Eternal Life which He came to unfold to us; who otherwise might have wandered, every one after the peculiar Imagination, or Inclination, or Humour, of our own Hearts? as Salvation therefore, comes in the Method proposed by Christ: so may it well be attributed to believing in Him; because that alone can put us into the Method proposed by Him.

3. CHRI-

SERM.

3. CHRISTIANS are *saved by Faith*,

IX.



because it is the Foundation of their Obedience, and of all their good Actions. It is the *Tree* which bears good Fruit; without which good Fruit there could be no Salvation: and consequently, what is so necessary, and so useful, to the Production of good Works, is it self entitled to those Rewards, and happy Consequences, which follow good Works. This is what St. *James* seems to think, that the only way of proving that we have Faith, is by our good Actions, *Ch. ii. 15*. Will any one, saith He, believe that you wish them well, or that you are willing to relieve them, if, when you see their Distress, you only tell them so; and at the same time deny them what you can afford them towards their Relief? From hence He argues, As there is no true Sign of this charitable Disposition, but the Fruit of Beneficence which it produceth; and as one who is always hard-hearted hath no Pretence to it: so, is there no Proof of a real Faith, but the Works it produceth: of which Works, therefore, a sincere Faith is never destitute. Thus will even *He* allow that *Faith may save*



*save us*, by influencing our Actions ; but no s e r m .  
otherwise.

IX.

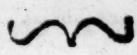
LET any one likewise turn to the *xith chap.* to the *Hebrews* ; there indeed he will find an Account of the Excellencies and Advantages of Faith ; of its Acceptableness to God, and its Efficacy towards our own Happiness : but He will find that the Argument must be resolved into this at last, that *without Faith it is impossible to please God*, because without Faith it is impossible to live a Life of Virtue, or to do such Actions as are there recorded : and that by *Faith* is meant a vital active Principle, moving us to behave our selves agreeably to our Faith. And therefore, with respect to Christians, *Faith* must be an active Principle, influencing and strongly moving them to such a Behaviour, and Conduct ; such a Life and Conversation, as their believing in such a Master naturally directs to. If we believe in *God* truly ; we cannot but love and honour him above all things. If we believe in *Christ* sincerely ; we cannot but endeavour to obey his Commands ; observe his Precepts ; and follow his Example. And thus shall we be *saved thro' Faith* or believing in Him ; because this Faith, if  
it

SERM. it be sincere, will be the Foundation of such

IX. an universal Obedience as He requires of us.

W IN these Senses, therefore, and on these Accounts, great Things might well be said of Faith in the New Testament; and Salvation attributed to it. But the great Point, in which we are concerned, is, not to be deceived in a Matter of such Importance; and to that End, not to interpret any one Expression of the *New Testament* so as to contradict the plainest and most repeated Declarations of it. Let the Conclusion of the present Subject, therefore, be to this effect, *Faith* is an Act of the Mind most acceptable to God. Faith in his Son saves us, as it puts us into the secure Way to Salvation, if we be sincere; and as it is the Foundation of all our Christian Practice, and of all our best and most Godlike Behaviour. This *Faith* alone, that is, the Method proposed in the Gospel, without the Works of the Ceremonial Law of *Moses*, is sufficient to secure to us our future Happiness: but *Faith* alone, that is, a Belief in Christ, without Obedience to his Laws; an empty, unfruitful Faith, accompanied with an ungodly Life, will condemn us at last. We are saved thro' Faith;

or

or by believing in Christ ; no otherwise than S E R M.  
by being influenced by it : for Faith is re- IX.  
quired in order to Practice. *Faith* is indis-   
pensably necessary in order to Salvation : and  
so likewise is a good Life indispensably ne-  
cessary in order to Salvation. Or, in other  
Words, a *Faith* working by Love, and ma-  
nifesting it self by good Works, is that alone  
which will be of any Account to us, at last.  
*For as the Body without the Spirit is dead ;*  
*so Faith without Works is dead also.* Now  
to God, &c.





or by believing in Christ - no other is than a man  
by whose influence he is brought to Christ - is re-  
quired in order to be saved - and  
to have it is a great blessing - and  
easily in order to be saved - Of this other  
When a man is brought to Christ - and  
faith is confirmed - and his heart is  
which will be a great blessing - and  
for the rest of his life - and  
to be a Christian - and  
to be a Christian - and



*The Mistake of relying upon external Performances considered.*

# S E R M O N X.

ROMANS x. 13.

*For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved.*



I HAVE frequently observed to S E R M. x. you that when Men are resolved to retain their Sins, and go on in their evil Practices ; and yet not to cast away all Hopes of future Happiness ; they are ready to lay hold on any obscure, or mistaken, Text of the New Testament : and to draw it to their own Purpose, without considering the Purpose of the Writer, or laying the whole Tenour of the Gospel together. One of this sort of Passages, relating to Faith, I considered in my last Discourse ; and endeavoured to shew  
P that

S E R M. that no Encouragement could be designed  
 x. in it for any to rely on a bare Belief of the  
 ~~~~~ Gospel, without the bringing forth those  
 good Fruits, and practising those Moral Du-
 ties, which the Gospel it self recommends.

A N O T H E R of the like sort, is That
 which I have now read to you; which some
 Men of weak Understandings, or strong Pas-
 sions, may be apt to separate from the rest
 of this *Epistle*, and consider it so much by
 it self, as to imagine that it was the Apostle's
 Design in it to make the *Calling upon the*
Name of God, or of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 the whole of the Gospel-Covenant; and to
 affix Salvation to the mere outward joining
 in the public Acts of Christian Profession,
 and Worship. This is a very great Error:
 and must prove at last a very fatal Mistake.
 And tho' it be indeed such a Mistake as one
 would think no one who considers the Na-
 ture of God, or all his Declarations in the
 Gospel, could permit himself to be guilty
 of; yet we find by Experience that many
 professed Christians do at least seek for Ease
 this way; and find as much as any such poor
 Pretence can give to the Conscience of such
 a Creature as Man is.

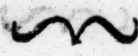
It

External Performances, considered. 211

IT cannot therefore be accounted unne- S E R M.
cessary or improper, to consider the Case of x.
such professed Christians as allow themselves
in the Commission of known Sins: and yet
receive Comfort, and entertain Hopes of fu-
ture Happiness, from their devout, and re-
peated Performance of some outward Acts of
Christian Profession, and Worship. They
know that they continue in the Practice of
Sin. But because they feel a Warmth of
what they imagine to be Devotion in the
Worship of God; because they frequent the
public Prayers, or Sacrament of the Lord's
Supper; because they hear his Word with
some Attention and Zeal; upon such Ac-
counts as these, they hope for his Favour at
last, and perceive some Satisfaction and
Rest in that Hope for the present: imagin-
ing, perhaps, that *St. Paul* is on their side,
and hath given it as his Judgment, that
whosoever should *call upon the Name of the*
Lord, as they do, should be *saved*.

ONLY, before I come to speak particu-
larly to the Case of such Christians, I must
give you a true Account of *St. Paul's* Design
in this part of this Epistle; which will at
the same time lead you to the true meaning

S E R M. of the Words of the Text: viz. that He is

x. here disputing against Two Errors of the
 *Jews*. The one is, their seeking Justification by the Law of *Moses*; and rejecting the Faith of Jesus Christ, and the Gospel preached to them as the only Method of Justification: and the other is, their imagining that the Messiah, whom they had been taught to expect, was to be of Benefit only to themselves; and that the *Gentiles* were to have no part in his Blessings. These two Errors, you may see, gave St. *Paul* no occasion of speaking particularly in this place of the Necessity which professed Christians lay under, to practise all Virtue; or any otherwise than in general Terms, of the Christian Faith; in Opposition to these Mistakes. It was enough for his Purpose to put them in mind that, according to the Law it self, they must seek for Justification in another Method, distinct from that of the Works of the Law of *Moses*; that this Justification had been declared by their own Prophets to be of such a nature, as that it must be effected by means of Faith; and that the same Prophets had enlarged the Bounds of the Kingdom of the Messiah, and had promised this Blessing to
all

External Performances, considered. 213

all true Believers wheresoever dispersed thro' S E R M.
the World. X.

THE first of these He doth, *ver. 4.* For *Christ is the End of the Law*; that is, the Law it self leads to Justification by the Gospel: because, as it follows, *ver. 5.* *Moses* himself proposeth Justification by the Law upon no other Terms, but that of a perfect fulfilling the whole Law in every Tittle. Now, none of you can pretend to this: and therefore you ought to be willingly led to seek for Justification, or Acquittance from your past Sins and Failings, by believing and embracing the Gospel.

As to the second; He puts them in mind, *ver. 11.* that *Isaiab* himself, one of their own Prophets, speaking of the *Messiah*, had declared long ago, that the true Method of obtaining the Assurance of God's Favour was by believing in Him, when He should appear; and by entering into his Religion. And then He argues, from the Latitude of this Declaration, that *whosoever*, whether *Jew* or *Greek*, takes this Method, *shall be saved*; alledging another of their Prophets, who had likewise, in speaking of the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, declared that *whosoever*, without any Ex-

SERM. ception of *Gentile* more than *Jew*, shall
 x. call upon the Name of the Lord, that is,
 ~~~~~ truly receive his Religion, let him be of  
 what Nation or Family soever, shall be saved; shall be saved by this from the Guilt of his past Sins; and, if He be sincere in this Profession, will infallibly be put hereby into a State of Salvation, and obtain it most certainly at the great Day of Accounts.

IT very plainly, therefore, appears that *St. Paul's* Design was not to fix the Terms of final Salvation; or to tell Christians exactly what was required of them: but, in general, to tell the *Jews* that it was the Voice of their Law, and their Prophets, that Justification could not be by their Law; and that the true Method in which they must come to be acquitted from the Guilt of their past Sins, and made happy at last, is the believing in Jesus Christ, and seeking this Happiness in the Ways proposed in the Gospel; and that in this Method the *Gentiles* had as real a Right to God's Mercy, as themselves.

HAVING thus given you a View of the *Apostle's* Design in this part of his *Epistle* to the *Romans*; I shall now consider the Presence of such as are led by this, or any other  
 like

*External Performances, considered.* 215

like Passage in the New Testament, or by SERM.  
any false Motive, to place their Confidence X.  
in the external Parts of Religion, whilst they  
manifestly refuse to permit it to have any  
vital Influence upon their Minds; and  
openly allow themselves in an habitual Course  
of Sin. And,

1. FROM what hath been said already,  
it cannot but appear absurd to take a gene-  
ral Expression of *St Paul's*, used upon quite  
another Occasion; and to apply it to what  
was not then in his Thoughts, or in his De-  
sign. He doth say, indeed, that the true  
Way to Salvation is the believing in Jesus  
Christ: and the external Profession of that  
Belief: in Opposition to such as sought for  
Justification by *Moses's* Law. But it is very  
unfair to argue from hence, that therefore  
*whosoever* doth call upon the Name of the  
*Lord Jesus*, tho' He live in constant Rebel-  
lion to his Laws, shall at last be made happy  
by Him; and that nothing but this external  
Act of Religion is required of Christians. So  
that *St. Paul's* manifest Design forbids us to  
apply his Words to what was not at all his  
Intent in this place.

SERM. 2. IF the plain Drift of his Argument did

x. not suppose this; that it would be the highest  
Absurdity to deduce any such Consequence  
from his general Declaration of God's Fa-  
vour to such as should come in to the Pro-  
fession of the Christian Religion. For sup-  
pose a Person should be commissioned to  
assure a Company of Rebels, that whosoever  
of them should resign themselves up to the  
Mercy of their rightful Prince; and own  
him publicly; and call upon his Name in  
their Petitions, and Submissions; should be  
saved from Punishment: would it not be  
the most unfair and absurd Conclusion, if  
they should argue from hence, that the Prince  
required nothing from them but this exter-  
nal Act of Submission; and that this would  
be for ever sufficient to secure his Favour;  
tho' they should after this reassume their for-  
mer Behaviour; openly violate his just Com-  
mands; and affront his Government? Who  
would not join in condemning such an  
hypocritical Submission as this? And who  
would not think it just, that their Punish-  
ment should be doubled upon them, even  
for the sake of this pretended Submission?  
And yet, Are the Dealings of many Men  
with



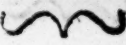
*External Performances, considered.* 217

with God Almighty's Declarations, in the SERM.  
least degree, better, or more justifiable? He X.  
sends his Son to entreat those who are Re-   
bels against Him, to be reconciled to Him:  
and he declareth by Him that whosoever  
comes in to Him, and believes, and calls up-  
on him, shall be in a safe Condition, and  
kindly received by him. And they argue  
from hence, that this external Act of Sub-  
mission, or Homage, is enough; and that  
they may safely rebel against Him for the fu-  
ture: so they do but in Words acknowledge  
Him. Whereas the Submission required,  
is a sincere, and hearty Submission: which  
it cannot be, if it be accompanied with Dis-  
honour, Disrespect, and Disobedience, in  
Actions. In this Case, Men should be con-  
vinced by their own Maxims, and Princi-  
ples. For if they abhor the Man who pre-  
tends Friendship, or Submission, whilst he  
neglects all Opportunities of doing them Ser-  
vice; or perhaps employs his Time in af-  
fronting and injuring them: how can they  
possibly imagine that any such general De-  
claration of God's Favour to such as *call up-*  
*on his Name*, or perform any outward Acts  
of Religion, was intended to make Men  
easy

S E R M. easy under a Course of Sin ; or to be applied to any Performances but what proceeded from a sincere and upright Mind, full of a true Sense of Religion, and bringing forth such Fruits as Sincerity cannot be void of ? So that were this Declaration in the Text separated from the Design of the Apostle ; and taken entirely by it self : it is contrary to all the Maxims, and all the Rules of proceeding amongst Men, to interpret it so, as to take Courage from it to affront Almighty God by the Disobedience of our Lives ; and to hope in his Mercy merely on Account of some external Performances of religious Worship. But, to proceed to other Considerations.

3. THIS *Pretence*, which I am now examining, doth really debase the Value of Virtue, in the Eyes of God, under the *Gospel-Dispensation*, below what it was under the Influence of the Ceremonial Law it self. When that Law was in force, one would have thought, that Men might then, if ever, have trusted to make themselves acceptable to God by the Externals of Religion ; by *Rivers of Oil, and Thousands of Rams* : yet we find even then, the Question asked, *What doth*

*External Performances, considered.* 219

*doth the Lord require of thee, but to do just-* SERM.  
*ly; and to love Mercy; and to walk humbly* X.  
*with thy God?* The Moral Virtues were 

the Things, even then, insisted on, when the Assistances, and Motives to them were not so great, or not so apparent; and when the Minds of the *Jews* could not but be more amused, and diverted from them, by their numerous and costly Services. And can any one believe that, under the Gospel, in which God hath declared a Day of Judgment to come, and pronounced his Wrath more openly, than ever, against Sin; and in which He hath promulgated the greatest Motives and most powerful Assistances; that, under this Gospel, I say, God should put such a Value upon the external Performances of Religion, as to make insignificant the more *weighty Matters* of it? That He, who said under the Law, *What doth the Lord require of thee*, but to practise the Moral Duties? should, under the Gospel, say, *What doth the Lord require of thee*, but to call upon *his Name*, or to hear his Word? That He, who laid such Stress upon Holiness, and Virtue, even when He had consulted Pomp and Ceremony in the *Jewish* Religion, should

now

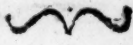


SERM. now in effect disengage Men from all strict

x. Obligation to that Holiness and Virtue; and  
 ~~~~~ turn all their Thoughts upon external Acts  
 of Devotion, and Religion, when He hath
 called the World to a Spiritual Religion, void
 of all that unnecessary Pomp, and Ceremo-
 ny? Who can believe this? Or who can fix
 so great an Absurdity upon the Christian Re-
 ligion? And if we cannot in Words fix such
 an Absurdity upon it; let us not entertain,
 even in our most retired Imaginations, any
 such Opinion, or Notion, as doth effectually
 lay this Scandal upon the most holy Religion
 that ever yet appeared in the World.

4. GIVE me leave to put you in mind of
 those many plain, unexceptionable, Texts
 of the *New Testament*, by which I so fully
 proved, in the former part of my present
 Design, that the actual Amendment of our
 bad Lives, and the Practice of all Holiness
 and Virtue, was indispensably required of us
 in the Gospel-Dispensation; and to argue
 from thence that it cannot be the Intent of
 any Passage, in the same *New Testament*, to
 fix Salvation upon any external Acts of Reli-
 gion unaccompanied with Holiness; or paid
 to Almighty God in order to appease him
 for

External Performances, considered. 221

For our Continuance in our Sins. Remem- SER M.
ber particularly Two Passages : the one of x.
our blessed *Lord* himself ; the other of St. 
Paul, the same *Apostle* who applies to *Chri-*
stians this general Declaration in the Text.

THE first is that in *Matth.* vii. 22, 23.
Verses : where, after our Lord hath declar-
ed that it is not the calling upon his Name,
without doing his Father's Will, that can
save us at last ; He goes on farther, *Many*
will say to me in that Day, Have we not
prophefied in thy Name ; and in thy Name
have cast out Devils ; and in thy Name
done many wonderful Works ? and then will
I profess unto them, I never knew you. De-
part from me, ye that work Iniquity. So
that, supposing Persons can even plead at
last that they have not only professed his
Religion ; but done many Things, beyond
the common Pitch of Believers, by the Pow-
er of his Name : yet they are in a desperate
Condition, if they be found to be *Workers*
of Iniquity. And if it shall fare thus with
Professors of so extraordinary a Rank : what
shall we say to Those who trust to be accept-
ed at last for the sake of much more incon-
siderable Performances ? Must not *they* ex-
pect

S E R M. peñt as certainly to hear the same Sentence ;

X. *Depart from me, ye that work Iniquity ?*

THE other Passage is in St. Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy, in the Second Chapter, the 19th Verse: *Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from Iniquity:* from whence it is evident that this Apostle could not be of that Opinion that *naming the Name of Christ, or calling upon the Name of the Lord*, in the Words of the Text, was sufficient for Salvation, without *departing from Iniquity*. For if He had taught any such Doctrine, it might have been easily retorted upon him by any professed Christian, who had a Resolution of continuing in his Sins. What necessity is there for *departing from Iniquity*, when it is declared that *whosoever calleth upon the Name of the Lord, or nameth the Name of Christ, shall be saved*, without this Departure from Iniquity ?

MULTITUDES of other Passages might be alleged from the same St. Paul, for the Necessity of Holiness ; and the Condemnation of Sinners at last : which all contradict the Pretence of such as would fix the contrary upon some of his Expressions. But I must
not

External Performances, considered. 223

not be always repeating them. Yet it is SERM.
worth while to remember that these are the X.
professed Christians, of whom He forewarns
Timothy, ch. iii. ver. 5. under the Character
of those who *have a Form of Godliness, but*
deny the Power thereof: whom he esteems
no better than Scandals to the Christian Pro-
fession; *Enemies to the Truth; Men of*
corrupt Minds; and reprobate concerning the
Faith, ver. 8.

5. IF we consider the Nature, Tenden-
cy, and Design, of all those external Acts
of Religion and Worship, in which some
Christians are inclined to place so great a
Confidence; we shall find it a great affront
to Almighty God; and the most gross Abuse
and utter Perversion of their Design, to rest
in them; to place our Hopes in them; and
to make the Performance of them the
Ground of our Expectation of the Favour of
God, whilst we continue in the Practice of
known Sins. For the great End of the *Chri-*
stian Religion is not that Men should pay ex-
ternal Homage to Almighty God, but that
their internal Tempers, and the whole Course
of their Lives, should be regulated by a deep
and constant Sense of God, and of a Judg-
ment

S E R M. ment to come. To keep up this Sense, and

x. render it effectual; and to encourage others
 ~~~~~ to profess, and carry forward, the same End;  
 public Assemblies of Christians were instituted, and appointed, for the united Acknowledgment of God, and their Saviour; for the more solemn Obligation of themselves to the Duties of their Religion; for the praying to God, the hearing his Word, and the partaking of the *Lord's Supper*.

Now what is Prayer to God, if it be not a sincere Acknowledgment of his Sovereignty, and our Dependency; of his Authority, and our Duty? And what is this, but an Affront, if we know, and own, our Obligations to serve and obey him; and yet continue wilfully to disobey and dishonour him? Or, if we imagine to put a Cheat upon him, and to satisfy him with the *Fruit of our Lips*, whilst our Hearts are far from him, and entirely indisposed to render him that Service which our Mouths own to be due to him? What is this Prayer, unless it influence us to Obedience? And why can we be supposed to ask of God his Assistance, and Holy Spirit; if we be resolved not to make use of it,

it, and continue to stand out against all its SERM.  
Motives and Offers?

X.  
AGAIN, what can we conceive that hearing God's Word could be intended for; unless for the Practice of what we hear? Now, suppose that a Servant of an Earthly Master should run with Zeal every Day to receive his Commands, and hear his Will; eagerly attending to it, and seeming to imbibe it greedily; whilst all the time He is resolved, not to perform it, or constantly goes away to his former Course of Negligence and Disobedience: would not this be justly esteemed the highest Affront, and greatest Indignity, to his Master; and the utter Abuse of his Master's Design in Calling upon him to hear his Duty? And thus it must be in Religion. Hearing can be only in order to our knowing our Duty; and knowing our Duty can be for no other End, but the doing it: and in all Cases, both of them are so far from excusing any who neglect it, that they are ever esteemed by Men the great Aggravations of that Neglect. *To whom much is given, of Him much will be required. He that knows his Master's Will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many*

*Q*

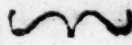
*Stripes:*



SERM. *Stripes* : proportionable to his Knowledge,  
 x. shall be his Punishment. How contrary to  
 some of his Disciples, who pretend to screen  
 themselves with their Knowledge? They  
 hear greedily, and know a great deal : and  
 from hence argue that they are what He ap-  
 proves ; and that this their Zeal in *hearing*,  
 shall cover their Crime in not *doing* his Will.

THIS is what St. *James* warns all Chri-  
 stians against ; the resting in the external  
 Action of hearing. *Be ye doers of the Word,*  
*and not hearers only, deceiving your own*  
*selves,* James i. ver. 22. and he goes on to  
 compare a Man, who comes to hear his Du-  
 ty, and goes away and neglects it, to a Man  
 that looks into a Glass ; and presently goes  
 away, and forgets his own Countenance.  
 The Man can consult the Glass with no  
 other Design, but to see something relating  
 to his own Face ; which he presently forgets,  
 as much as if he had not consulted it. The  
 Christian can hear the Word for no other  
 End, but to know his Duty : and yet, his  
 Behaviour shews that he goes away and im-  
 mediately forgets it. And thus the End of  
 hearing ; the only End to which it can serve ;  
 is totally neglected and perverted.

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OF such *Hearers* as these, remember SERM.  
what our *Lord* himself pronounces, *Matth.* x.  
vii. 26. at the end of the longest Discourse,   
He is recorded to have made; and that, in  
which it was plainly his Design to preach  
Morality, and rescue Virtue from the Cloud  
which had been cast over it. *Every one*, saith  
He, *that heareth these Sayings of mine, and*  
*doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish*  
*Man which built his House upon the Sand;*  
*And the Rain descended, and the Floods*  
*came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon*  
*that House; and it fell, and great was the*  
*Fall of it.* Such is the Man, we see, who  
builds his Hope of Salvation upon his bare  
hearing the Word of God with Greediness,  
without a conscientious Practice of what he  
hears. The Woman in the Gospel who  
heard with Delight the Words of Life, as  
they proceeded out of our *Lord's* own Mouth,  
lift up her Voice, and said unto him, *Blessed*  
*is the Womb that bare thee.* But he said,  
*Yea rather, Blessed are they that hear the*  
*Word of God, and keep it,* Luke xi. 27, 28.  
So ready was He to lay hold on every Op-  
portunity of assuring his Disciples, that their

Q 2

Happiness

SERM. Happiness depended upon their doing what  
 x. they heard, and knew, to be their Duty.

THE like may be said of partaking of the Lord's Supper: which was intended for the united Profession of our Faith in Christ; and the open Acknowledgment of our Obligations to live as becomes his Disciples. And what then can it be, to rely for Salvation upon the outward Act of communicating; or the present Fit of Devotion in which we find our selves, separated from, and void of, all Influence upon our Lives, and Practice: what can this be, I say, but to mock our blessed Saviour; to celebrate his Sufferings, and join in afflicting him; to own our selves his Disciples, and behave our selves as his Enemies; to contradict the Design of the Duty; and to fly to that *Religious Rite* for Refuge from the Punishment of Sin, which was instituted for a perpetual Memorial against Sin, and designed as one of the greatest Motives against the Dominion and Power of it?

NOTHING, I think, can be plainer than that thus to depend upon the external Acts of Devotion and Religion, for Salvation; without that Holiness of Life which they were designed to further and promote; is one  
 of



*External Performances, considered.* 229

of the greatest Instances of Ingratitude and SERM.  
Presumption that can well be thought of? a X.  
formal Mockery of Almighty God and our  
blessed Saviour; a Contradiction to the *End*  
and Design of the external Duties themselves;  
and a fatal Delusion and Deceit upon our  
own Souls: it being certain that our Per-  
formance of these external Duties is so far  
from being an Excuse; that it will be the  
greatest Aggravation of a wicked Life.

AND now, if these Things be so; what  
must we say of some sort of Christians? They  
come to these external Parts of Religion for  
Comfort. With Hands, and Eyes lifted up,  
and an Air of the highest Devotion, they  
will call upon the Name of the Lord, per-  
form the publick Acts of Worship; hear his  
Word with Greediness; and perhaps partake  
of his Table. But here they rest. The same  
unmortified Lusts and Passions which they  
bring with them, they carry back again: and  
return, day after day, to take their Rounds  
of what they call Religion; in order to  
flatter themselves, the more plausibly, into  
a Fancy that they are not wholly devoted to  
Sin, and the World. And if they be a little  
easy themselves in this Method; they are apt

S E R M. to think that Almighty God is easy with  
 X. them likewise. But it is high time to awake  
 out of this Dream. It is the Paradise of  
 Madmen ; and a State of the deepest Folly  
 and Misery. It is high time to consider what  
 Religion is : that it is not the being profes-  
 sed Christians ; or Members of the best  
 Church in the World ; or Frequenters of  
 the public Worship ; or attentive Hearers  
 of God's Word, that can at last avail us ;  
 without living as becomes Christians ; with-  
 out adorning the Church we boast of, by  
 an exemplary Holiness ; without manifest-  
 ing a deep Sense of God in all our Conver-  
 sation ; and without doing that Will of our  
 heavenly Father, which we pretend to hear  
 with so much readiness.

AND God grant that all of us may so  
 consider these Things, as to let them have  
 their due Influence upon all our future Be-  
 haviour, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord!  
*Amen !*

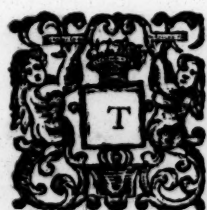
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*The Power of Charity to cover Sins, considered.*

# S E R M O N XI.

I P E T E R iv. 8.

*And above all things have fervent Charity among your selves : for Charity shall cover the multitude of Sins.*



THE Design which I am now S E R M.  
 prosecuting, obligeth me to XI.  
 take notice of such Passages of  
 Scripture as any professed Chris-  
 tians may, on any Account,  
 be apt to interpret to a very bad Purpose:  
 that is, to the giving themselves Encourage-  
 ment to hope for God's future Mercy, for  
 the Sake of his Son : even whilst they con-  
 tinue in the habitual Practice of known Sins.  
 And the Words which I have now read to  
 you, as well as some others in the *New Tes-*



SERM. *tament* to the same purpose, seem at first  
 XI. reading, and taken by themselves, to be as  
 ~~~~~ likely to be abused this way, as any we can  
 well pick out: which, therefore, I now de-
 sign carefully to consider; in order to pre-
 vent any such fatal practical Mistake as may
 endanger the Salvation of those who profess
 the Faith of Jesus Christ.

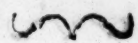
THE *Apostle* is, in this Verse, after the
 most earnest manner, pressing upon the
 Christians to whom he writes, the most fer-
 vent and unconfined Love towards one ano-
 ther, *Above all things, have fervent Cha-
 rity among your selves*: as his great Master
 had frequently, in the most pathetic man-
 ner, exhorted his Followers to love one ano-
 ther. From which Words, *Charity among
 your selves*, it is evident that He is not in
 this place, pressing upon them Love in the
 most comprehensive Sense possible; or the
 Love of God, which is a distinct part of the
 Law of Christ; but particularly the Love of
 one another.

NOR is it any Objection against this
 (which is indeed plain from the very Words)
 that the form of Expression, with which
 the *Apostle* introduceth them, seems too
 much

much for this. For the Phrase, *above all things*, in the common use of it, is not designed to be understood, as making the thing spoken of, of greater Importance than every other Point whatsoever: but only to signify that the Matter is of great Importance; and that there was great Occasion, perhaps from some manifest Failure amongst the Persons spoken to, to press upon them this Particular, at this time, above all others. Thus, to give one plain Instance, St. James, in the *fifth* Chapter of his *Epistle*, at the 12th ver. brings in the Prohibition of Swearing, after the same manner, *But above all things, my Brethren, swear not*. Not that any one can imagine but that other Crimes, condemned by the Gospel, were full as much to be avoided by Christians, or were of a less heinous nature than this: but that He had some more than ordinary present Occasion to remind them of their Duty in this Particular; and in an especial manner to charge them not to be guilty of this Vice. So likewise, in the Case before us, there may be supposed very good Reason for St. Peter, at that time, to press upon the *Christians* to whom He wrote, the Love of one another,

SERM.

XI.



S E R M. another, *above all things*; because they either had offended particularly against this Law, or were most likely to do so; without putting such a Sense upon this common Form of Expression, as if He must mean by it any thing more, and greater, than what his own Words profess; *viz. fervent Charity among themselves.*

T H I S might suffice to account for the manner of his introducing this Duty: but it is fit likewise to consider that the Love of one another, considered as a Duty distinct from the Love of God and all other Duties; the Forgiveness of one another; the bearing with, and tenderly regarding one another, is so peculiar a Branch of Christianity: is so much insisted on by Christ himself, as the indispensable Condition of our Happiness, and that which He came down from Heaven in an especial manner to implant, and encourage in the Minds and Manners of Men; that an Apostle, and Preacher of the same Gospel, might well, in speaking to Christians, put them in mind, in a very particular manner, to regard this peculiar Branch of their Profession; that Love of one another, by which all Men were to know they were

were Christ's Disciples, and to see them distinguished from the rest of an unfriendly, and selfish World about them. S E R M. XI.

IT is, therefore, without doubt, as the Words themselves shew, Love to one another, peculiarly so called, or *a fervent Charity among themselves*, that St. Peter is pressing upon them with such Vehemence: and which he urgeth farther by this Consideration; *for Charity*, i. e. this Charity to one another, of which He is speaking, *shall cover the multitude of Sins*. With respect to which words, all my present Design is to guard against any fatal practical Mistake, by considering in what Senses they may possibly, or probably, be understood; and shewing that no Encouragement can be drawn from these or the like Words, taken in any Sense of which they are capable, to induce Christians to hope for Salvation on account of their *loving* one another, or forgiving one another, without forsaking their own Sins, and entering upon an holy Course of Life in other respects.

INDEED, it is very observable that there are none less likely to stand in need of the Abuse of this Text than such as are truly charitable;

SERM. ritable; and sincerely love their Neigh-
 XI. bours; and are heartily disposed to forgive
 ~~~~~ their Offences against themselves: that none  
 have fewer Faults to cover, than such as  
 these; or are less likely to take Refuge in  
 their *Charity*, to indulge themselves in any  
 thing evil. For, Did any of us ever know  
 one truly charitable Man; I mean, charita-  
 ble in a regular and stated Course, and in  
 an eminent Degree; who willingly allowed  
 himself in the habitual Practice of any  
 known Vice; or in any sort of Transgression  
 of God's Law? On the contrary, tho' we  
 may have known a very vicious Man do par-  
 ticular Acts of Liberality, and shew an un-  
 common Generosity upon some uncommon  
 Occasion; perhaps out of an ill-gotten Stock,  
 and to support a great Temporal Interest:  
 yet, did we ever know any Man, who con-  
 tinued in a course of a *multitude* of known  
*Sins*, to be regularly charitable in a great  
 degree; and always disposed and ready to for-  
 give and overlook all Offences against him-  
 self? But yet it is fitting sometimes to do more  
 than may be strictly necessary, in order to  
 take away all Pretext from such Men, as may  
 fancy themselves possessed of a Charity which  
 they

they have not ; and take Courage from SERM.  
thence to presume upon the Mercy of God. XI.

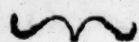
To return, therefore, to what I proposed, 

I. IT is not at all improbable that the *Apostle*, when he declares that our *Charity shall cover*, or covers, *the multitude of Sins*, means that it will, or doth, cover the Sins of *others* ; and not our own : which Interpretation at once cuts off the Ground of the Mistake, supposed to be founded upon this Declaration. And supposing him to speak of the Sins of others ; it may be, as it hath been by several Interpreters, understood two ways.

1. IT may signify that our Charity and Love to others will incline us to *cover*, that is, to hide so as to forgive, and not to revenge or punish, all the Offences of others against our selves. So that the *Apostle* may exhort the Christians to have a fervent inward Affection for one another, on this Account ; because this fervent Love of one another will incline them to overlook and forgive all the Offences of others against themselves : which is so main a part of the Evangelical Law, and so acceptable in the Eyes of God. Against



SERM. this Interpretation there may be *Two Ob-*  
 XI. *jections* raised.



I. THE first is, that the Phrase, which is rendered *to cover Sins*, is always in other places used with respect to God's covering our Sins, and not to our covering the Offences of others against our selves. But this will not be of great force, because, tho' this may possibly be found true, yet, it is to be looked upon as a Matter purely accidental; and not arising from any Impropriety in applying the Word to the Sins of others: it being of that nature, that it is full as apt to express our covering, so as to pardon the Offences of others, as it is to denote God Almighty's covering, so as to pardon our Offences. Just as the Word *Forgive* is used both of God's forgiving our Sins, and of our forgiving one another: So may the Word *Cover* be, in it self, equally proper in both cases; and the Circumstances or Words of any particular Passage of Scripture be reasonably left to determine to which it is designed by the Writer to belong. If the Word which is translated *Forgive*, had happened to have been generally used in speaking of God's forgiving us; this would not have been a Proof that it  
 might

might not have been used, in one or two S E R M. places, where our Forgiveness of one another was spoken of : and the same may be said with respect to the Word *Cover*; which is equally applicable to both Cases. From whence it follows, that no Argument can be drawn from hence to prove that it may not as properly and justly be said that Charity *covers* the Offences of others against us, as that it *covers* our Offences against God. Indeed, if there were any thing peculiar in the Word, which made it absurd to apply it to any thing but our own Sins against God; a critical Argument might be drawn from hence against this Sense. But when the Word is frequently used in many other Cases, and applied to many other Things; nay, is only in a metaphorical Sense used for Forgiveness, or taking no notice of, Sins; nothing can be urged from hence against using it in all Cases, in which it is equally proper. Besides, as I hope to make out by and by, this very Word and Phrase is used by St. *James*, with respect to the Sins of others.

2. It may seem to some a little absurd to make the *Apostle* press Christians with so much Vehemence to mutual Love; not by declaring

SERM. declaring the future Reward of it, but by  
 XI. laying before them one main Effect and  
 ~ Branch of it, as a Motive to engage them to  
 endeavour after that Love. But if we con-  
 sider what a Stress the Gospel layeth upon  
 our Placability, and Forgiveness of one an-  
 other; we shall not much wonder to find  
 an *Apostle*, earnestly pressing Christians to  
 labour after that inward Disposition, which  
 will produce such an Effect; so necessary to  
 their own Happiness. Let us labour after a  
 fervent Charity, or Love, for one another;  
 for this will dispose us readily to *cover*, to  
 pass by, overlook, and forgive, the greatest  
 Number of Offences of others against our  
 selves: This, I say, is no small Argument  
 to Christians, who know that this is the  
 way to their own Forgiveness, and Happi-  
 ness; and a Condition, without which they  
 cannot hope to have their own past Sins  
 covered by Almighty God. The like way  
 of speaking is used by *St. Paul*, Rom. xiii.  
 8. where He exhorts the Christians to *love*  
*one another*, because *He that loveth ano-*  
*ther* may be said to have *fulfilled the Law*:  
 that is, because, if we truly love one an-  
 other, this will induce us to do no Mischief,  
 but



but all possible Good, to our Neighbour; SERM.  
and so to come up to what is required of XI.  
us by God, with respect to our Neighbour,   
which must be a great and substantial Motive  
to any Christian to endeavour after such a  
Love, and Charity.

2. THE second way, in which the  
Words of the Text may be interpreted, with  
respect to the *Sins* of *others*, is this; that,  
if we have a *fervent Charity* for others, this  
will engage us to seek after the Conversion  
of such as are Sinners, and so our Love to  
the Souls of Men, shewing it self by turning  
many to Righteousness, will be the Occasion  
of God's covering, or pardoning, their Sins,  
who are so turned from a Life of Sin, to all  
holy Conversation, and Godliness. This is,  
indeed, a safe Sense of the Words. But, I  
cannot think it so probable that the Apostle  
could mean this; because it is unlikely that  
the Christians to whom He wrote should so  
understand him: since He doth not make  
the least mention, or give the least hint, of  
that Conversion of Sinners, upon which this  
Interpretation wholly depends. If this had  
been the thing in his View; it is hardly pos-

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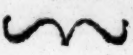
sible

SER M. fible to suppose but that He would have once

XI. mentioned what He principally intended.



I GRANT, indeed, that there is a Passage at the latter end of St. *James's Epistle*; which in Words is parallel to this in St. *Peter*: about which it is now fit to say something. The very last Words of that *Epistle* are these, *Let him know that He who converts a Sinner from the Error of his way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall cover a multitude of Sins*, the very Words used by St. *Peter*. Where indeed it is very natural to interpret the Words to signify, that by converting a Sinner to Righteousness we *save a Soul from Death*; and are the Occasion of God's not punishing those many Sins, which if they had been continued in, must have laid the Sinner open to the Divine Vengeance: which is a Consideration enough to move any sincere Christian to that Work. Nor is it any Objection against this Interpretation, that *saving a Soul from Death, and covering a multitude of Sins* in this Sense, are the same thing, in other Words; when the Apostles seems to propound them as two distinct Motives: because there are numberless Instances, in sacred and profane Writers

of the best Rank, of the like Tautology to SERM.  
 this; viz. the expressing the present Sen- XI.  
 timent of their Minds, at the same time,   
 after several ways, and yet still to the same  
 Purpose.

BUT here, we see, when St *James* meant particularly to signify to Christians that it was by Conversion of Sinners that they might be Instruments of *covering a multitude of Sins*, which was a great and God-like Work; that He doth not speak of Charity in general: but very particularly and plainly points out to them that particular Branch of it, by which *a multitude of Sins* might be *covered*. And this is an Argument why St. *Peter* probably had not this in his View: because, if He had, there is no reason to think but that He would have said so, as plainly as St. *James* did; or, at least, that He would have given some Hint, sufficient to have led us to understand Him to the same Purpose. Nor is the use of the same expression sufficient to shew that they both meant the same thing: it being full as proper for St. *Peter* to tell Christians that their Love to one another would engage them to forgive one another's Offences, with-



SERM. out respecting or punishing them; as for St. XI. *James* to tell other Christians that their converting a Sinner would be the means of his past Sins being covered, so as to be forgiven by God. This shews us that, as the Word *Cover* is applied to several other things as well as *Sins*; so, may the Expression of *covering Sins*, or a *multitude of Sins*, be used with respect to very different Cases, and with very different Views.

THIS, therefore, is the first general Proposition I lay down, that these Words may be so interpreted, at least one way, very probably, as to respect only the covering the Sins of others from Punishment; and not our own. And if this be the Intent of the Apostle in this place; the Inference is plain, that all Ground is removed of building upon it any such Opinion, as that any degree of any sort of Charity will *cover our own* Sins: since, according to this Interpretation, all that is here said, is that our Charity will cover, and overlook, the Failings and Offences of others. Nay, if this be but a possible Interpretation of the Words; as long as it is free from all Hazard; who would be so weak as to venture his Eternity, and

and Salvation, upon the Possibility of any SERM.  
other Sense, not so certainly safe, and secure? XI.

But lest any Sinner should think himself too  
hardly dealt with; and not indulged and  
soothed, so much as he may imagine this  
*Passage* to have indulged him: let us pro-  
ceed farther, and, in the *second place*,

II. LET us suppose that the *Apostle* intend-  
ed in the Text to exhort and allure *Christi-*  
*ans* to *Charity* amongst one another, by tell-  
ing them that *Charity* would cover the mul-  
titude of their own Sins: and yet we shall  
find, upon a due Examination, how small  
a Consolation this, or any the like Affir-  
tion, rightly understood, can afford to any  
*Christian* who continues in his Sins. And,  
under this Head, it is my Design to take no-  
tice of *three* or *four* several Passages, which  
may give unstable Men occasion of imposing  
upon themselves.

As to the Words of the Text; supposing  
it be affirmed by St. *Peter* that *Charity shall*  
*cover the multitude of our own Sins*; I say,

I. IT is highly unreasonable to interpret  
this, as if He meant that it should atone for  
the wilful Sins in which we still continue:  
because to say this of any thing, is to con-

S E R M. tradict, as I have often observed, the whole

XI. Tenour of the Gospel, in which *the Wrath of God is revealed*, without Exception, against all *Unrighteousness*. This therefore, cannot be fixed upon any obscure Words of the first Preachers of the Gospel: whose Business it was to declare this *Wrath of God*: it being one certain Rule to go by, not to fix a Sense upon any particular Passage, contrary to the main Design, and Tenour, of the whole.

2. IT is contrary to St. *Peter's* own Declarations, and most earnest Exhortations, in this very Epistle: who beseecheth the Christians to whom He wrote, *to be holy in all manner of Conversation, as He that called them is holy*, ch. i. 15. *And to abstain from fleshly Lusts which war against the Soul*, Ch. ii. ver. 11. and the like. Now in vain did He do this; and to no purpose were all his Exhortations: if He can be supposed to tell them after all, that tho' they should *not be holy in all manner of Conversation*; tho' they should *not abstain from fleshly Lusts*; yet they might be secure of the Favour of God; that, if they did but take care to love one another, that would cover all. So that  
if

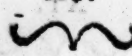


if we would not make St. *Peter* contradict S E R M.  
and destroy his own Design; we must not XI.  
make him speak after this manner. 

BUT if any should say that St. *Peter* means it of a most comprehensive and extensive Love of God, and Man: I answer, that He saith himself, He means it of *Charity among themselves*; and that St. *James* hath used the very same Words of one single Branch of brotherly-Love, which are supposed, by those who alledge this, to be exactly parallel in meaning to these in St. *Peter*. This wholly takes away the Benefit of this Observation; and affixeth Salvation to one single Branch of Charity, distinct from other Virtues.

AND here, having mentioned the *Passage* in St. *James* again; I must observe of *that* likewise, that, supposing the *Apostle* to mean by it, that a Christian by *converting a Sinner doth cover*, or make an Atonement, for his own Sins; yet, it cannot there be understood of the Sins he continues in; but only of those which He hath forsaken: because the particular Branch of Charity spoken of there, supposeth the Necessity of all Sinners being converted, in order to the

S E R M. saving their Souls. If therefore, I convert

XI. a Sinner; yet, if I my self remain a wilful  
 Sinner against God's Laws in other respects;  
 there is the same Necessity of my being converted, in order to the saving my Soul, that there was for the Conversion of the other, about whom I have been labouring. But if it were sufficient to convert another; though the Converter himself remain a wilful habitual Sinner; supposing that another should afterwards convert this Man himself from his Sins; it cannot be said, as this Passage affirms, that He *saves a Soul from Death*, because it was saved before by his having converted another: and then likewise, all the Business any Man hath to do, is to endeavour to chuse out some Sinner, and by all means to labour his Conversion; upon which He may be sure of God's Favour, let his own Life be what it will. But what then signifieth the *Gospel of Jesus Christ*? and the Terrors of the Lord displayed in it against Sinners; if such a Sense can be fixed upon any part of it? It remains, therefore,

3. THAT, if St. *Peter* meant the Words of the Text with respect to our own Sins, all his Intention was to say that our loving  
 one

one another; our kind Regards; our Placability and good Nature; our Forgiveness and Forbearance of one another, would engage Almighty God to forbear the Punishment of us, or to forgive to us our selves those manifold Sins, which we have ever been guilty of towards Him, in Time past: not those which we still indulge our selves in; but those which we have forsaken. For I must observe to you that this is the Peculiarity belonging to that great Virtue of loving one another, so as to be ready to forbear, and forgive; *viz.* that, for the sake of *that*, God will forgive us the Sins which we have forsaken: but that, without it, (that is, unless we forgive others, our Neighbours and Brethren;) even those Sins which we have formerly been guilty of; tho' we have forsaken them, and tho' God had, upon that, heretofore forgiven them; shall be remembered against us, solely on the Account of our implacable and unforgiving Temper of Mind.

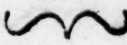
IF St. *Peter*, therefore, speaks of *our own Sins*, as covered by our Love to others; I take him to say what our Lord himself affirmed, *Matth. vi. 14. If ye forgive Men their Trespases, your heavenly Father will also*

SERM.  
XI.



SERM. *also forgive you*: to the right Interpretation  
 XI. of which Words, what I have already said  
 will lead all Christians who are not resolved  
 to impose upon themselves. The Interpretation which I mean is this, that, if they forgive the Trespasses of others, God will likewise forgive them the Sins which they have forsaken, and amended: but, if they do not forgive others, that even those Sins which God had formerly remitted to them, on Account of their first Faith, or Amendment, shall be again accounted for, and severely punished upon them in the other World. And thus *Christ* himself seems to have explained it in the Parable, *Matth. xviii. 3.* in which the *Lord* punisheth his Servant for the Debt which He had once forgiven him, only because afterwards He would not forgive the small Debt of one of his Fellow-Servants.

To draw towards a Conclusion; If our Lord, in his Account of the great Day, speaks of *Alms-giving* only; we see, by the forementioned Text, and multitudes of others, that it was not his Design there to speak of every thing necessary; but only to shew the great Acceptableness of that Branch  
 of

of Charity to God Almighty; and what S E R M.  
 strict Enquiry there would be made, at the XI.  
 great Day, into the Practice of this Virtue:   
 but that we must not so interpret it, as to  
 render void his other plain Declarations a-  
 bout the absolute Necessity of all the other  
 Instances of Goodness and Holiness.

IF, in any other Places of Scripture, or  
 in the Apocryphal pious Writers, *Alms-giv-*  
*ing*, or any sort of Charity, be spoken of  
 as an *Atonement for Sins*; or particularly,  
 in any of the first Christian Writers: it is  
 evident how a Christian must understand such  
 Expressions. Every thing that is commen-  
 dable; Every singular Act of Piety, or Cha-  
 rity, may be, by a Figure of speech, called  
 a *Sacrifice*, as it is offered to the Honour and  
 Service of God by those who perform it  
 rightly: or an *Atonement*, as it may be said to  
 make some Amends for a past Life of con-  
 trary or Vicious Actions; just as a present  
 Regard and Friendship, and the serving any  
 Man in a very remarkable Matter of Impor-  
 tance, may be called an Atonement for a  
 past State of Disservice and Disrespect; with-  
 out supposing any such single Actions to be  
 any Satisfaction, or Atonement, for multi-  
 tudes

S E R M. tudes of Affronts which we continue, upon

XI. many more Occasions, still to offer Him.

~~~~~ IF any Writers, of good Authority, have parallell'd the *Atonement* of *Mercy* with that of *Baptism*; this shews still farther that they could mean it with respect to nothing but past Sins, forsaken and abandoned. For, as *Baptism* atones not for any Sins, but such as were committed before it, and are utterly renounced in it; not at all for such as the baptized Person continues in, after his *Baptism*; so, in like manner, cannot *Mercy*, or *Charity*, by any one who useth this Similitude, be thought, or said, to atone for any Sins, but what are forsaken by the merciful Person: not at all for such as He still continues to be guilty of.

F R O M all which there cannot be any Consolation, or hope of Salvation, drawn to any such Christians, as still go on to allow themselves in the wilful Violation of any of the Laws of Christ: but, on the contrary, this Consolation of making some sort of amends to *God Almighty*, by signal Acts of *Charity*, belongs only to such as, tho' Sinners in Time past, yet have now actually reformed their Lives.

THIS,

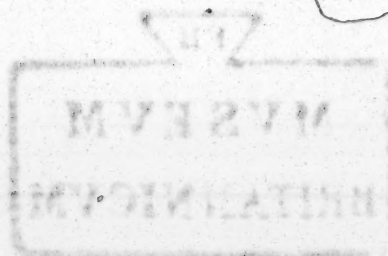
THIS, therefore, is the Christian Doc- SERM.
trine about *Charity*; or rather, about that XI.
part of it which consists in Forgiveness of
others: that, on account of this, for the
sake of *Jesus Christ*, God will cover and
forgive our Sins, which we have forsaken;
and not without it. And this is so far from
releasing us from the Obligation of forsaking
them; that it supposeth it done, and adds
to it the Obligation of our imitating God
Almighty in forgiving one another: which
God grant we may all do, &c.



FH

MVSEVM
BRITANNICVM SERMON

The first of these is the
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*Of relying upon the Merits of Christ, for
Salvation.*

S E R M O N XII.

First Epistle of St. JOHN, Ch. II. part
of the 1st and 2d Verses.

*If any Man sin, we have an Advocate with
the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:
and he is the Propitiation for our Sins.*



IN this Passage, the *Apostle* de- S E R M.
clares that it is for the sake of XII.
Jesus Christ, and on account of
his sufferings, that the Sins com-
mitted by his Disciples will be forgiven
by Almighty God. Now from this, and
the like Declarations in the *New Testament*,
many professed Christians have taken oc-
casion to frame to themselves such Notions
concerning the Merits of Christ, and the Sa-
crifice of his Death, and his Intercession
with

SERM. with the *Father*, founded upon these; as

XII. may comfort themselves in their Continuance in Sin, and take off from their Minds all that Uneasiness which might otherwise arise from the Reflexion on their own wilful Demerits, and Unworthiness. Which fatal Proceeding of Christians addicted to their Lusts and Passions, makes it necessary particularly to consider this Point; in order to rectify so pernicious a Mistake. And to this End, I propose at this time

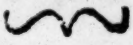
I. To lay down the Doctrine of the *New Testament*, concerning the Merits of *Christ*; or the Effect of his Sufferings, with respect to the Pardon of our Sins, and our future Happiness.

II. To take more particular notice of that unworthy Abuse of this Doctrine, of which Christians, in these later Ages especially, have been, and are guilty.

III. To shew the Baseness and Absurdity of this Abuse. And,

IV. To point out to you the true, and good Uses that Christians, ought to make of this Doctrine.

I. THE Doctrine it self, concerning the Merits of *Christ*, or the Effect of his Sufferings

ings towards the Pardon of our Sins, and S E R M.
our eternal Happiness, I have heretofore in XII.
effect proposed : when, under the former 
part of my present Design, I shewed you
that, in order to our Acceptance and final
Justification, thro' *Jesus Christ*, it is abso-
lutely required of us in the Gospel, that we
forsake those Sins which we have been guilt-
ty of ; and practise sincerely an universal
Obedience to the whole Will of God, any
ways made known to us. This having
been plainly made out from the most ex-
press Declarations in the *New Testament* ; it
is enough to observe from hence, that, in the
Words of the Text, *Jesus Christ is the Pro-*
pitiation for those Sins, which we carefully
and conscientiously endeavour to avoid, and
forsake ; not for those which we wilfully
continue in : that the *Merits of Christ*, so
much talked of by some, are so great, that,
for the sake of his Sufferings, God will ac-
cept to his Favour and Mercy, such as lay
hold on the Terms offered by the same *Jesus*
Christ ; such Christians as relinquish and
abandon their Vices ; and come up to that
Condition of universal Holiness required by
Him ; but not such as still continue, not-
withstanding

SER M. withstanding all his Calls, and all his De-
 XII. nunciations, to prosecute their own vile
 ~~~~~ Lusts, and to oppose and contradict the Will  
 of God.

THIS, I say, most manifestly follows from the plain Proofs formerly given, out of the New Testament, concerning the indispensable Necessity lying upon Christians to forsake their Sins, in order to their Pardon; and to practise all Virtue, in order to their Happiness. For if these Conditions be plainly and expressly required in the Gospel-Covenant; then it is apparent, beyond Contradiction, that, upon the Gospel-Covenant, sealed by the Blood of Christ, and entered into for the sake of his Merits, there can be no Pardon, nor Salvation, demanded, or hoped for, but by such as forsake their Sins, and obey the Moral Laws of the Gospel: and, in other Words, that the Sufferings of Christ have actually procured these *Conditions* to be granted by Almighty God; that so those Sinners who have forsaken their Sins, and entered upon a new Course of Action, may obtain Justification from the Guilt of their former Sins, and Eternal Happiness in the Kingdom of Heaven.



AND who will not say that this is sufficient Satisfaction to any well-disposed Mind, to be assured, in such a way, that He is accepted by God, and hath a Title to Happiness? without which Assurance, the Mind of a considering Person must be perpetually disturbed with Fears and Jealousies. And who will not own that this is all that could be expected, or reasonably wished for, from a God of Holiness, and Wisdom, as well as of Mercy; to offer Pardon and Salvation upon these Conditions only? since by this Method He gives all the Comfort to Sinners that is possible, without encouraging them to continue in their Sins; and all the Discouragement possible to Vice, without making every Instance of it absolutely unpardonable.

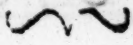
IF any reply to this, that the Merits of so divine, and spotless a Being as *Jesus Christ* are infinite; and therefore every thing may be hoped for from them: I answer, that the Question is not, what the *Merits of Christ* are in themselves; or what they might possibly have procured; but what the Gospel declareth that they have actually procured for all sincere Believers. Let them be what they will in themselves; They can be no more to

SER M. us, than what God Almighty thinks fit to

XII. make them, agreeably to the eternal Laws of Reason, and Wisdom. The Mercy of God is, in a good Sense, infinite : that is, it is bounded by nothing but his own perfect Wisdom, and Holiness : against the Laws of which Wisdom and Holiness it cannot act ; and beyond which, it would not be a Perfection, but a Weakness. So likewise, supposing the Merits and Value of Christ's Sufferings to be unbounded, and infinite, considered without supposing the Gospel-Covenant actually made : yet, when it pleased God to be moved to make a Covenant by these Sufferings; the Merit of these Sufferings, with respect to such as God enters into this Covenant with, must be bounded by the plain *Terms* and *Conditions* of this Covenant. It depends upon God's Will, and his Wisdom, what these *Conditions* shall be : and consequently what is procured for us by these Sufferings can be no more than what God sees fit ; and what He declareth, they shall procure for us. And therefore, I say, let the Merits of Christ be never so unbounded, before this Covenant is supposed ; let the Value of his *Propitiation* be infinite ; yet it is plain they are bounded,

*Merits of Christ, for Salvation.*

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ed, as to us, as soon as God declares what S E R M.  
He will do, and what He will not do, for XII.  
the sake of these Sufferings : which is the   
Business of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

No w, when it is declared by this very  
Person, whose Merits are so much pleaded  
by some, that God will accept returning Sin-  
ners, upon their Amendment ; and that such  
as continue in their Sins shall be excluded  
from his Kingdom : I say, when He himself  
declareth this ; He doth in effect declare to  
Christians, in other words, that He hath no  
Merits available for any who are not reform-  
ed according to his Moral Laws ; that, tho'  
He be the *Propitiation* for their Sins, yet  
it is for their past, and forsaken Sins ; that  
the Extent and Effect of his Merits, with  
respect to his Disciples is this, that, for the  
sake of his Sufferings, God will forgive the  
Sins of such as do at any time so turn to him  
as heartily to abhor and forsake them ; and  
make happy all such as do sincerely set them-  
selves to the Practice of Righteousness, and  
make an actual Progress in the Ways of his  
Commandments. Let any one but read the  
New Testament with a well-disposed Mind;  
and He will find that This is the whole Doc-



S E R M. trine of Christ and his Apostles, concerning  
 XII. the Merits and Value of his Sufferings, and  
 ~~~~~ their Efficacy towards the Pardon and Sal-  
 vation of his Followers. But though this
 be so manifest, yet,

II. IT is as manifest, that there have been, especially in these later Ages, and still are, (in a very vicious Generation of Men) Multitudes of Christians, who are not content with this, that God should pardon the Sins which they have forsaken, for the sake of the Merits of Christ : but profess to believe that He will pardon all the Sins which they can possibly continue in, till Death overtakes them ; if so be they can but have Time to declare their Trust in Christ's Merits to this Purpose ; or, in the usual Phrase, to apply to themselves, with abundance of Confidence, the Merits of their Saviour, or the Promises of God made to Christians for the sake of his Son Jesus Christ. They seem to think that Christ's Merit excuseth them from attempting to have any Merit in themselves : nay, that it would derogate from, and disparage his Merits, if they should pretend to have any thing in themselves so much as agreeable to the Will of God ; that it would
 be

be a piece of unpardonable Presumption in S E R M.
them, to pretend to imitate the Moral Per- XII.
fections of God, tho' they are called *to be* ~ ~
holy, as He is holy.

SOMETIMES they urge that there is nothing perfect here; and no Man but what sins: and that, if they themselves stand in need of the Merits of Christ to screen them from the Divine Vengeance; so do their Neighbours likewise. As if, because the Value of Christ's Sufferings will atone for the Failings, and the forsaken Sins, of a sincere Christian; therefore, they must needs atone for the wilful and continued Transgressions of such as go on to disgrace that holy Name by which they are called, by a most unholy Life, and are every Day wilfully affronting their God and Saviour. How unaccountable is this? And yet there is hardly any thing more common, than for the most notorious and wicked Christians to profane his Merits, and his Sufferings, by openly professing their Trust, and entire Confidence in them. And, what is very remarkable, the more unchristian and profligate Men have been in their Lives, the more strong and confident shall you often find them in that which

S E R M. they call *Faith*, and in their foolish Trust in
 XII. that which belongs not to them. So that,
 whilst many good Christians, thro' Excess of
 Modesty and Humility, or thro' bodily Indisposition, are almost sunk with the Imagination that they have not done enough to give their Hearts Ground for Confidence in the Mercies of God: you shall frequently find many of those, who have stood out against all the Calls of God to Repentance and Amendment, and persevered to the End in Vice and Immorality, as secure of his Favour at last, and as satisfied with their Prospect into another State, by the help of their groundless Confidence in Christ's Merits, as if the Gospel had been calculated, not to engage Men to *deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly*; but merely to speak Peace, and Quiet, and Comfort, to the Minds of the most notorious Sinners, even whilst they know themselves not to be amended in any respect.

BUT how great must the Power of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, be upon the Hearts of Men, when they can influence them to believe, (as it hath happened to some)

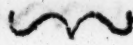
some) that the way to glorify the Grace and S E R M.
Mercy of God is to multiply their Sins and XII.
Vices ; that the way most largely and effec-
tually to partake in the Merits of Christ,
is to add Sin to Sin, that there may be the
more to be pardoned, and the more Thanks
due to him who pardons ? These, and the
like Absurdities, contrary to the whole
Tenour of the Gospel, hath a Love to Sin
imposed upon some Men ; as a Refuge from
the Reproaches, and Forebodings, of a guilty
Conscience ; and these are often found to be
fixed, without the least Ground, upon such
general Declarations of the Value of the pro-
pitiatory Sacrifice of Christ, and the Merits
of his Sufferings, as that in the Text.

BECAUSE He is declared to be a *Pro-*
pitiation for our Sins ; to be our *Advocate*,
by virtue of that Propitiation, *with the Fa-*
ther ; *to have purged our Sins upon the Cross* ;
and to have died for us Sinners ; because,
in consequence of these Declarations, it hath
been delivered and taught by the Churches
of Christ, that, *by his one Oblation of him-*
self upon the Cross once offered, He hath
made a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacri-
fice, and Satisfaction, for the Sins of the
whole

SERM. *whole World* : therefore, they argue that

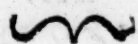
XII. their Sins cannot be too many for such a Sacrifice to atone for ; therefore they plead that these Sins, thus atoned for, are of all sorts ; as well those which they indulge themselves in, to the last Period of their Lives, as those which have been forsaken, and abandoned ; abusing the Mercy of God, and the Merits of their Saviour, to their own eternal Perdition ; as will appear, if we consider seriously,

III. THE great Unreasonableness, Baseness, and Absurdity, of this Abuse. That Christians should so far forget the nature of their Religion, which hath, in the plainest Words, made an universal Holiness indispensably necessary ; that they should be so far from being led by the Goodness of God to Repentance and Amendment, that they should rather take occasion from his Love to treasure up for themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath ; that those very Sufferings of Christ, which were designed as the greatest Argument to affright them from all Sin, should be made as it were the Incentive and Motive to them to continue in Sin ; that the greatest Instance of Love ever displayed before the Eyes of Men should be returned in Affronts,

Affronts, and Disobedience to God, and to S E R M.
his Son : These are such astonishing Marks XII.
of absurd Confidence, and Baseness of Tem- 
per, as cannot be parallell'd.

THE Nature, and End of the Christian Religion, plainly established, must direct us in all our Interpretations of any of its general Declarations. And this Religion being holy, pure, and spotless ; revealed by the Son of God from Heaven for the Conversion and Amendment of the World, and to teach us to forsake all Sin, and to live in all holy Obedience to God ; the Wrath of God being often declared in it against all Unrighteousness of Men : it is impossible that any Comfort should be administred in it to such as continue in Sin ; because this would be to destroy its own main Design, and to frustrate its own great End. From hence therefore it follows, that it is the highest Absurdity to argue from its general Declarations concerning a Sacrifice for Sins, and a Propitiation of invaluable Merit, that this Sacrifice will be available for those Sins of Christians in which they still wilfully continue : because this is to contradict the great End of their Religion : to make all Virtue unnecessary ;

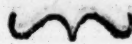
SERM. fary ; and to turn all Christianity into a confident Appeal to the Merits of Christ.



AGAIN, It is the most absurd and unreasonable thing in the World, to fix such a thing as this upon Almighty God : or to suppose that He should send a Person from Heaven, to live and dye here on Earth, and to teach Mankind an excellent Doctrine ; and at the same time declare, that it is no great Matter whether they imitate his Example, or obey his Precepts, if so be they do but trust in his Merits, rely upon his Sacrifice, and put their Confidence in the infinite Value of his Sufferings ; that this shall be their Comfort here, and their Reward hereafter. Who can believe this possible, I say, that knows and considers what God is ; an holy, and wise Being ; at an infinite distance from all Sin and Iniquity ? For what would this be, but to reveal a Religion from Heaven, with the greatest solemnity, on purpose to assure Men that Virtue is of no great Importance ; and on purpose to encourage Vice, and Immorality in the World ? I say this because, in truth, such Pretences of Christians do manifestly, and effectually, tend to nothing else, but to render vain all the moral Precepts of
the

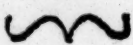
the Gospel ; and to bring a Contempt upon S E R M.
all that is substantially good in Religion. XII.

A N D if this be so absurd in any reason-
able Creature, to fix such an Absurdity upon
God ; how much more absurd and intolerable
must it be in a Christian, after this Revelation
is made, in which the Nature of God, and his
Hatred of Sin, are made known to him, to
affront Almighty God with a Supposition
which a very Heathen would be afraid to
make ? Nay, it receives a great Aggravation,
when it is considered that it is by the Declaration
of the Gospel only that we can know what the
Merits of Christ's Sufferings are to us ; and
that in this they are so plainly limited, as to
the Extent, and End of them, that a sincere
Mind cannot mistake. I have already observed
to you what is declared there ; and, with how
much Plainness all who continue in their Sins,
are debarr'd in that from any Benefit from
the Sufferings of Christ ; nay, how plainly they
are assured that this very Gospel, and the
Sufferings of Christ, shall be an aggravation
to their Punishment hereafter. And if, notwithstanding
all the Limitations which God himself hath
set to his Mercy, and to the Merits of
his

SERM. his Son ; these Persons will make a new Covenant, and a new Compact, for themselves :
 XII.  what must we think of such an egregious and groundless piece of Folly and Absurdity ?

BESIDES, how base and ungrateful a Temper must this proceed from ; to make use of the Goodness of God, and those sufferings which were the highest Instance of Christ's Love to them, as an Encouragement to themselves to take part with the great Enemy of God and of Christ ? How would it sound in the Ears of any Man of the meanest Capacity, to hear Christians speaking thus, *God so loved the World that He sent his only begotten Son* ; and this Son of God hath declared his Love in dying for Sinners, after an unparallell'd manner ; therefore, let us affront him, and join our selves to his greatest Adversary ; still trusting that his Merits, and Sufferings, will make him look upon us, and treat us as his Friends ? Yet, after this manner doth every Sinner argue, who resolutely continues a Sinner ; and yet pretends to trust in the Merits of his Saviour, for Pardon, and Salvation.

To make the matter yet more plain ; put the Case that any Prince should send his own Son to a Company of professed Rebels ; and for

for the sake of what He should do and suffer S E R M.
amongst them, offer to be reconciled to such XII.
of them as should be influenced by this Me- 
thod to repent, and return to their Obedi-
ence: what greater Affront, or Indignity,
can one well imagine, than, if these Per-
sons, professing to lay hold on his Offers,
should yet continue to affront him, and dis-
obey all his just Commands, as much as ever;
and yet all the time plead before him the
Sufferings of his Son, and argue that his Me-
rit must screen them from Punishment, which
was designed merely to make their future O-
bedience accepted; and which greatly in-
creaseth the Guilt of their continuing such
Affronts, and Injuries? Would not this Ap-
peal to those Merits appear only a piece of
formal Mockery; and justify to all the World
the severest Punishment of those who should
have nothing else to plead? Let us therefore,

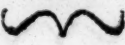
IV. LASTLY, from what hath been said,
learn the true and good Uses which Christi-
ans ought to make of the *Merits of Jesus
Christ*, and of the Value of his Sufferings.

I. In the first place, we may lawfully
and justly plead before God the Merits of his
Son, and his invaluable Sacrifice, as what He
hath

SERM. hath been pleased to declare that He accepts,

XII. as an Atonement for those Sins which we
 ~~~~~ forsake, and abandon: and for the sake of  
 this, we may beg, with a well-grounded  
 Assurance, that He will pardon all our past  
 Offences, and whatever is amiss in our whole  
 Frame; and accept of our sincere Endeavours  
 after an universal Conformity to his  
 Will in all Things. This is a sort of *Trust*;  
 and indeed the only *Trust* in the Merits of  
 Christ, which we can justify, or from which  
 we can reap any Comfort, or Advantage:  
 because indeed this is the only Trust agree-  
 able to the Nature and Design of the Gos-  
 pel; and to the many plain Declarations of  
 the New Testament.

THERE is nothing in that sacred Book,  
 of the great Efficacy of applying the Merits  
 of Christ to our selves, in all Circumstances,  
 with an undaunted Confidence. This is a new  
 and modern Addition to the Gospel of  
 Christ. But if we look into any Page of it,  
 we cannot but learn from thence, that we  
 have no Encouragement to apply these Merits  
 to our selves, nor any just Ground of Satis-  
 faction from them, unless we find in our  
 selves a persevering Resolution to forsake all  
 Vice;

Vice; and a constant Endeavour to perfect SERM.  
Holiness, whilst we have Opportunity: and XII.  
that it is the uniform Doctrine of the same   
*New Testament*, that those who have wil-  
fully continued Sinners to the last, have no  
part in the revealed Promises of God; nor  
consequently the least Right in the World to  
apply the Merits of Christ to themselves in  
particular, which are declared to belong only  
to such as have forsaken, and renounced  
their Sins. And if this be not true; then it  
must be true that the Gospel makes no dif-  
ference between a virtuous, and vicious Life;  
but makes Eternity depend upon such a  
Confidence as the best Christians often want,  
and the worst generally have most of.

2. IN the next place, we ought all to  
draw a strong Argument against all Sin, and  
for all holy Obedience, from those very Me-  
rits, and Sufferings of *Jesus Christ*, under  
which some Christians would hide their con-  
tinued Iniquities. For if Christ be the Pro-  
pitiation for our Sins; then what must Sin  
be to Almighty God, who took so severe a  
Method to be reconciled to Sinners? and  
what ought it to be to Christians, who know  
this? How hateful, and how abominable?

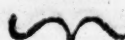
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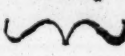
SERM. *If God so loved the World, that He sent his*

XII. *only begotten Son; if this Son voluntarily*

 *humbled himself to the vilest Death for us: how ought we to study to do every thing pleasing to him; and to avoid every thing which He hates and abhors? If so invaluable a Price were paid; that we might be reconciled to God upon any Terms: how ought we to be moved, by the Greatness of this Price, to come up to all his Terms, and Conditions; and not to think so long upon the Price, as to forget the End for which it was paid?*

*Ye are bought with a Price; therefore glorify God in your Body, and in your Spirit, which are God's: saith St. Paul, 1 Cor. vi. 20. The Price paid by Christ to buy Us into his Service, is, in his Account, the greatest Motive why we should serve such a Master faithfully. Pass the Time of your Sojourning here in Fear, saith St. Peter, forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible Things, as Silver, and Gold, but with the precious Blood of Christ, 1 Peter i. 17, 18, 19. This is the Use, which the Apostles earnestly direct Christians to make, of the Merits of their Saviour: but they*  
never

*Merits of Christ, for Salvation.* 275

never once advise, or command, or so much SERM.  
as permit, them to think that they shall be XII.  
saved by these merits, after a Life spent in   
continual Disobedience to his Moral Laws.

LET this Doctrine, therefore, be fixed in  
our Minds. The Merits of Christ's Suffer-  
ings are so great, that they will atone for  
the longest Course of Sins ; provided we  
have forsaken, and utterly abandoned them ;  
but of such a nature, as terribly to aggra-  
vate the Guilt and Punishment of those  
Christians, who take occasion to continue in  
their Sins, because *Christ* is declared to be  
the *Propitiation for them*.



My dear Sir,  
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 11th inst. in relation to the matter of the  
of the same, and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities for their consideration.  
I am, Sir, very respectfully,  
Your obedient servant,  
J. B. Smith



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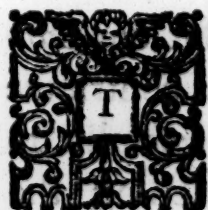
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*Mistakes about Man's Inability, and God's  
Grace, considered.*

## S E R M O N XIII.

2. COR. iii. 5.

*Not that we are sufficient of our selves, to  
think any thing as of our selves : but our  
Sufficiency is of God.*



THE *Apostle*, in this *Epistle*, was S E R M.  
led, by the cunning Manage- XIII.  
ment of some evil-minded Per-  
sons amongst the *Corinthians*,  
to assert his own *Apostleship*; and his own  
Right to be their Director and Instructor,  
as He had been the Founder of their  
Church, and of their Faith. But lest they  
should think that He boasted of himself  
above measure; as if from Him, considered  
by Himself, came all their Good, and all  
their Happiness of being made Partakers  
T 3 of

278 *Mistakes about Man's Inability,*

S E R M. of the *Gospel*; He thinks fit in this Verse to  
 XIII. obviate this Insinuation, and to assure them,  
 ~~~~~ that by what He had now, or any time before, said to that purpose, He did not design to arrogate to himself the Glory of being the chief and principal Agent in this Matter; but that it was to the great Original of all Things, even to God himself, that they were obliged for so great and unspeakable a Blessing. *Not that we are sufficient of our selves to think any thing as of our selves: but our Sufficiency is of God.* That is, Not that We *Apostles*, of our selves, did or could lay this Scheme of Salvation: not that it is to us that the Contrivance, and Administration of this, is to be ascribed. But our *Sufficiency*; our being able thus to contribute to your Happiness, and thus successfully to minister to your good, by preaching the *Gospel*, is owing to God.

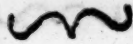
THAT this is the meaning of the *Apostle*, in these Words, will be evident to any one who will be at the Pains to lay together what goes before, and what follows after this Verse. For whoever doth that, will find that the *Apostle* is not here speaking, or thinking of the Duty ordinarily required of Christians,

Christians, in order to their final Acceptance; but of a Subject entirely different from this; viz. of the Work of an *Apostle*; of the first Original of that *Scheme* of *Salvation* which the *Apostles* preached to the World; and of that Knowledge and Sufficiency which the first Preachers of the Gospel had in order to the Performance of their great Work. But tho' this be so plainly the meaning of the Words; yet many Christians, of later Ages, have been led from this Text, and others of the like Sound, into such Errors, as tend, in their own natures, to obstruct and hinder the great Design of the Gospel; and to make Men easy and careless about the Performance of those Terms of Acceptance, Holiness and universal Righteousness, which are so plainly required in the Gospel.

It is, therefore, of great Importance, to examine, and confute such pernicious Mistakes; and to shew that there is nothing in the *New Testament* to favour them. The Mistakes at which I now particularly point, are such as are founded upon a very fatal Notion of the Weakness, and Inability of Man; and of the part which Almighty God is to

S E R M. act in the Business of Reformation, and
 XIII. Holiness. For many Persons have not been
 content with saying that their Natures are
 weak and frail; too easily carried away by
 the Force of that multitude of Trials which
 surround them in this State; that the *Flesh*
is weak, and their Inclinations directed with
 a strong Bias towards Sin and Wickedness;
 but are likewise pleased with representing
 themselves in such a State of Inability, and
 Insufficiency, as that all Motives, and all
 Calls to Repentance are in vain; in such a
 State, as that it is impossible for them, by
 any Act of their own Mind, either to pray
 effectually to God; or successfully to bear
 any part, in the great Work of their Salva-
 tion, themselves.

So likewise, with respect to *Almighty*
God; they are not content with acknowledg-
 ing that the great Design of their Happiness
 is owing originally to Him, and is his Work;
 or that all their Powers and Faculties come
 from Him, who made them what they are;
 or that He is ready to assist their Endeavours,
 whenever they exert them; to answer their
 sincere Prayers, and to impart to them what-
 ever is necessary to their successful running
 the

the Race that is set before them: but they S E R M.
take a sort of Delight in thinking, and speak- XIII.
ing, as if Almighty God were to do all for 
them; as if He, in his own Time, will irre-
sistibly move them to do his Will; and as if,
unless he thus interposeth, they have no
Power, or Strength, to do any thing towards
forsaking those Sins to which they have
made themselves captive.

IN these Senses do they think it for their
Purpose, to understand the Words of the
Text, and some other Expressions of the
New Testament, concerning the Insuffici-
ency, and Weakness of Man; and the Suffici-
ency, and Power of God, in the Matter of
Salvation. In order, therefore, to put a Stop
to such Notions as these, which naturally
tend to render Men indisposed to all At-
tempts and Endeavours to do their Duty;
I have the following Observations to make:

I. ST. *Paul* himself builds no such Do-
ctrine upon that great and strong Notion He
had of his own Insufficiency; and of the Suf-
ficiency of God. This *Insufficiency*, I have
shewn already, had reference to the Work of
his *Apostleship*; and to his successful Perfor-
mance of it; that is, to his publishing and
enforcing,

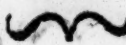
SERM. enforcing, the Terms of Salvation, amidst
 XIII. a Thousand Difficulties, and a World of
 ~ Hazards. But because this great Work of
 Redemption was originally the sole Design
 and Contrivance of Heaven; because his be-
 ing an *Apostle* was owing immediately to
 God; and the Success of his Labours, and
 his own Courage and Conduct in his Office,
 depended upon the Providence, and the Fa-
 vour of God: He doth not presently infer
 that nothing was to be done by Himself,
 considered as distinct from his great Patron.
 But, in this very *Epistle*, He represents Him-
 self, and the other *Apostles*, as *Workers to-
 gether with God*, ch. vi. 1. and often speaks
 of his indefatigable Endeavours to answer
 the Ends of his Office. And if He were a
Worker together with God; He had certainly
 a part of his own distinct from that of *Al-
 mighty God*, in this great Affair. And con-
 sequently, as He had God Almighty's *Suffi-
 ciency* to support Him, and make up his De-
 ficiencies; so He had likewise some Strength
 and Ability of his own, for his own part.
 And as *God* was the *Architect*; the chief
 Builder, Director, and Encourager of the
 whole;

whole ; so likewise was the *Apostle*, a *Worker* - S E R M.
er, under and *together with*, Him. XIII.

IF, therefore, in that great Work of the *Apostleship*, encompassed at that time with so many Difficulties and Hazards, St. *Paul* did not mean by such Expressions to signify that he himself had no part to act, but as forced, and impelled irresistibly, by *God Almighty* ; but left a part for himself, as well as gave to God the chief Part, and Glory, in it all : much less will it follow, that he meant these and the like Expressions, to signify that, in the Business of every ordinary Christian, so much less difficult than that in which he was engaged, God Almighty was to do all, without the Concurrence of the Man himself ; and without his having Strength and Power to bear any part in his own Happiness. If the *Apostle* had such Power, as to be a *Worker together* with God, in that vast and boundless Office ; much more may Christians, in their ordinary Spheres of Action, be supposed to have Ability to bear some part in the carrying forward their own Perfection here, and Salvation hereafter.

SERM. 2. BUT supposing that St. *Paul* had referred the whole to Almighty God, in the
 XIII.  literal and strict Sense of the Word; and left himself nothing but a passive Character; and represented himself as irresistibly moved by his Almighty Arm: this having been said by him merely with respect to so great, and difficult a Task, as was that of an *Apostle*, in those first Days; it will not at all follow from hence, that the same is true, with respect to an Office, or Business, not so difficult, and hazardous. It will not so much as follow, that the same is true with respect to succeeding Ministers, and Pastors of the Church, in the ordinary Course of God's Providence; much less will it follow, with respect to the Body of Christians, whose Task doth not take in so great a Compass. It doth not follow that because Almighty God takes the whole upon himself in a great and immense Difficulty; therefore, He likewise takes the whole upon himself, in a Matter of much less Difficulty, and of a much more confined Importance.

3. THE Assistance which God affords to Christians, and the part which He bears in the Work of their Salvation, is so far from being

being a Proof that they can do nothing to- SERM.
wards it themselves; that it is a most pow- XIII.
erful Argument, and made use of in the 
New Testament, to engage them to do some-
thing for themselves. *Work out your own*
Salvation, saith the same St. Paul, with
Fear and Trembling: for it is God that
worketh in you both to will, and to do, Phil.
ii. 12, 13. On this very account, use your
own Strength and Power, in the Affair of
Religion; because God himself, in the Chri-
stian Dispensation, affords you his Influen-
ces, and his Assistances. And indeed, what
more powerful Motive can there be thought
of, to engage us to hearty and uninterrupted
Labour, in our Christian Warfare, than
this, that we are carrying forward a Work,
in which God himself is engaged; that if it
fail at last, the Gracious Design of God will
fail thro' our Negligence; that we have so
powerful an Assistant and Patron, that the
Difficulty of our Work need not discourage
us from attempting it, or persevering in it;
that we are *Fellow-workers* together with
God; and therefore should be animated to
exert our selves, as all are incited to do un-
der the Eye and Encouragement of their
Superiors;

SERM. Superiors; and to do even more Work, and
 XIII. with more solicitous Concern, than we
 ~~~~~ could do, if we had not such a *Patron*,  
 and such an *Assistant*?

To take away the Despair of Success, is so far from Encouraging the Idleness or Neglect of any Person engaged in an Enterprize, that it is absolutely necessary towards their having any Heart, and Courage, for the Execution of it. This *God Almighty* takes from us, by representing himself as our Director, and Assister: and it is this which should fill us with more Concern lest the Enterprize should fail; and animate us with a stronger Resolution to use all our Endeavours. It is because we have such Hope of good Success, under the Patronage of so much Wisdom, and so much Power, that we should be much more vigorous, and resolute, than if we had not such an Encouragement as is included in *God's working in us both to will, and to do:* And,

4. How weak soever we may be; since it is plain, from what I have already said, that the Gospel doth not suppose us in a State of utter Inability to bear any part in our own Happiness; I say, our Weakness, or  
 Inability

Inability to perform the whole, our selves, S E R M.  
is no Argument why we should leave the XIII.  
whole to Almighty God ; and not think our  
selves obliged to work together with Him.   
And yet this seems to have been the Ground  
of Mistake in this Case, that the Evangelical  
Dispensation, and consequently the Salva-  
tion of Men, is represented as the sole Con-  
trivance and Work of God, in which we  
bear no part, and were incapable of bear-  
ing any. This, without doubt, is true; that  
we could not have thought of, or entered  
into, such a Scheme for our own Happiness.  
But it doth not follow that, when He offers  
this Happiness to us, He offers it to Beings,  
as incapable of laying hold on it, as the very  
Stocks and Stones. It doth not follow, be-  
cause our great Benefactor prevents us with  
his Kindness, and voluntarily offers us his  
Benevolence, and his helping Hand to free  
us from the greatest of Evils, and enstate us  
in the most complete Happiness; that there-  
fore we are unable to accept this Kindness,  
and to help forward so good, and merciful  
a Design. No, let us acknowledge, as much  
as we please, our own Insufficiency, and  
Inability, for so God-like a Work as that of  
recovering

S E R M. recovering us from Misery to Happiness ; to  
 XIII. the Glory of Him who is the *Author, and*  
 ~~~~~ *Finisher of our Salvation* : but let us not  
 sooth ourselves in Vice, under the Pretext
 of a false Humility ; and look upon our
 selves as too weak to do the least thing to-
 wards our own Pardon, and Salvation. For
 our Inability to do some Things, doth not
 infer our Inability to do others ; nor doth our
 being incapable of the whole, taken all toge-
 ther, prove that we are incapable of any part.

BUT, in return to what hath been said
 under these two last Heads, I am sensible
 that some other Expressions of the *New Testa-*
ment, may be objected. As,

1. IT may be said that the whole of this
 great Work of Repentance, and Salvation,
 seems, in some Expressions, to be ascribed
 to God : and He to be represented as the sole
 Agent in it. In answer to this I have all
 ready observed that the Contrivance, and
 Scheme, of the whole Dispensation in
 which we have Salvation offered us, and
 the making and proclaiming the Terms of
 it, are wholly owing to Him, and to his
 Goodness ; previous to any Work, or Me-
 rit, of ours : and consequently, it is no

Wonder that *this* is wholly attributed to SERM.
Him, which is, indeed, literally speaking, XIII.
solely, and wholly, his Work. When any
such Expressions, therefore, come in our
way, we should consider whether the Wri-
ter be not speaking of this *Christian Dispen-*
sation, as the Work of God: And if he be,
we may be sure that this signifieth nothing
to the present Question. For God might be
the sole Author of this Offer, and this whole
Scheme: and yet we may have Strength and
Ability to do something towards the laying
hold on the Terms of it; towards the com-
plying sincerely with his Offers; and towards
the finding out, and Performance, of his Will.

BUT if such Expressions should be used,
concerning *Almighty God*, with respect to
our receiving Benefit from this Dispensation,
and the like; it is to be considered farther,
that there is nothing more common in all
sorts of Writers, than to speak of the chief
Leader, Director, and Performer, of any
Work, as if no other deserved to be menti-
oned. Thus God Almighty's Favour and
Holy Spirit, being the great Support and
Strength of Christians; it is no wonder if,
according to the general Custom of speak-

U

ing

S E R M. ing, the great Affair of Salvation be spoken
 XIII. of, as all owing to that. Just as any great
 ~~~~~ Action, tho' executed by a great many in  
 Conjunction, is yet frequently said to be  
 owing to *Him* particularly, who was the  
 great Disposer of all Things concurring to  
 it; and had the chief Hand in it: so may it  
 be in this Case, without inferring that, strictly  
 speaking, no one besides him hath any  
 Concern in it. It is because, comparatively  
 speaking, He bears the chief part; and be-  
 cause without his favourable Concurrence  
 nothing could successfully be done, that He  
 may well, agreeably to the Rules of speak-  
 ing, be sometimes represented as the Doer  
 of the whole. But it doth not at all follow,  
 from such customary Forms of speaking,  
 that He neither expects, nor requires, the  
 Concurrence, and hearty Endeavours, and  
 Pains, of those to whom He is so good.

A G A I N, It is proper to consider that  
 whatever Powers, and Capacities, we have,  
 are originally his Gift, and therefore all the  
 good Effects of them may justly be ascribed  
 to *Him*, as to the first and original Author  
 of all that we have, and all that we can do;  
 that it is to the Concurrence of his daily Pro-  
 vidence,

vidence, and to the Disposition of all Cir- S E R M.  
cumstances, which is his Work, that we are X I I I.  
indebted for every thing. Without this, we  
could not have the Opportunity, or Possibi-  
lity, of knowing the *Terms of Christian Sal-*  
*vation* ; or of complying with them. And  
therefore, it may justly be ascribed to Him,  
whatsoever is done towards our Happiness,  
even by our selves. And, in this Sense,  
without *Him*, we could neither think, nor  
act, to any purpose, in our great and most  
important Concerns. But all this is very  
consistent with our being moved, after the  
manner of free Agents, by the Motives he  
proposeth ; and by the Circumstances in  
which he is pleased to put us.

AND then, in all those parts of our Chri-  
stian Duty, and in all those Cases, in which  
his Interposition is requisite to our Success,  
He hath promised his Holy Spirit to them  
that ask it, and make use of it : a Spirit,  
which, as it was to be the Support of his  
*Apostles* in their greater Work ; so is it, in  
proportion, to be the Guide, and Assister of  
all Christians, who are sincerely desirous to  
follow it. But this implies in it that we are  
able, at least, to ask for this *unspeakable Gift*



SERM. of God : because otherwise it would be but  
 XIII. mocking us to promise it to our Prayers, it  
 implies indeed that this Spirit is the great  
 Agent ; the great Help to Perfection ; and  
 to a Renovation of the Mind of Sinners,  
 and a Reformation of their Practices ; so  
 that great things may be spoken of it : but  
 it doth not imply that those to whom it is  
 given are only the mechanical Instruments  
 of it, or any thing to that effect ; any more  
 than the Assistance of one Man granted to  
 another, in any Affair, in which without it  
 he could not succeed, supposeth that this  
 other must do nothing himself, and make  
 no Steps, as a voluntary Agent, towards the  
 accomplishing his own Ends.

WHATEVER, therefore, is said, in the  
*New Testament*, or supposed to be said, of  
*Almighty God*, as the *sole Author* of all re-  
 lating to our Salvation, may, we see, very  
 justly be accounted for, by the common  
 Usage of speaking, without drawing so strange  
 and absurd a Consequence from it, as di-  
 vests Men of all Pretence to any part in it :  
 especially considering, in the last Place, that  
 in the same *New Testament*, the greatest  
 Care is taken, when any parts of it are ad-  
 dressed

addressed to Christians themselves, to urge, SERM.  
and press, and incite them, as free Agents, XIII.  
to the performance of their Duty; to deal  
with them as if on themselves, and on their  
own Endeavours, depended their Happiness;  
to charge them not to be so ungrateful to God,  
as to think of leaving all to Him to do: and  
to threaten them with eternal Damnation,  
if they neglect to do what is required of  
them. This likewise will help us,

2. To answer the *Objection* which may  
be made to what I have said concerning the  
part of Christians themselves in the Affair  
of Salvation: *viz.* That the *New Testament*  
seems to represent them in a *dead and life-  
less* Condition; unable to help themselves;  
and the like. For, supposing this, yet, that  
these, and the like, Expressions were not de-  
signed to be understood in any Sense con-  
trary to what I have said, is plain from those  
multitudes of Addresses, and Appeals, to  
Christians themselves; and from those ma-  
ny earnest Entreaties, Motives, Promises,  
Threatnings, in the same *New Testament*:  
all contrived to make them exert themselves;  
all such as are inconsistent with the Supposi-  
tion that *God* will help them without their

SERM. own Help ; or that they are not able to do  
 XIII. that part, which God requireth, and incite-  
 ~~~~~ teth, them to do.

BUT I must remark farther, that, if you consider those Passages which have this Appearance, you will find that they are chiefly, if not always, such as respect only the State of Mankind, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, before the Light of the Gospel brake in upon them ; and before the Offers of Salvation were made, or accepted. Before that, the World was universally *dead in Trespasses and Sins* : and the Motives, to induce them to arise from this Death, came solely from God ; not from themselves. But yet the very offering them *Spiritual Life*, supposed them capable of accepting it ; the very pressing, and inciting, them to revive from that Death of Sin, supposeth that they could do what they were so incited to. Almighty God quickened them by these Motives, and Offers ; but then, even in this, their accepting and complying with them must be, in part, their own Work ; or it could never be made their Reward. As a Man that is stupid and insensible, in some considerable worldly Concerns, may be said to be *dead*,
 and

and *lifeless* ; and as the Motives, and Arguments, and Persuasives, of Men can quicken and put Life into him, actuating him into good Resolutions, and setting his Zeal on fire ; and yet the Man himself not supposed to be unable to do any thing for himself, but the contrary : so, in the Case before us, a Man may be called *dead in Trespasses and Sins* ; and the Wrath of God, or the Joys of Heaven, and all the Offers of the Gospel, may quicken him ; and to these may the thing be ascribed ; yet, all this while, without supposing him *dead*, in a literal Sense, or incapable of bearing any part in the accepting these Offers, in the regarding these Motives ; and in helping forward his own Happiness. This is a figurative Expression, applied to the State of Sinners : who, as they are said to be *quickened* by God and his Gospel ; so are they very frequently called upon to consider their Ways ; to rouse themselves out of their supine, and slothful state ; to *forsake that which is evil, and practise that which is good*. Neither, therefore, is the great Part which *Almighty God* bears in our Salvation, an Argument that *He* will do all, without *Us* : nor is our Weakness, and Inability,

296 *Mistakes about Man's Inability, etc.*

SERM. bility, a total Incapacity to join with Him,
 XIII. in our hearty Endeavours and Labours. But
 ~~~~~ as his Hand is necessary ; so is our own. As  
 his Arm is powerful to save ; so is our own  
 requisite to our Happiness. As our Weak-  
 ness is nothing without his Strength ; so his  
 Strength will be nothing to us without our  
 Weakness. As he is the great Contriver,  
 and Disposer, of the whole Scheme of our  
 Salvation, and is ready to give the *Sufficiency*  
 of his Spirit to all who sincerely ask it ; so  
 we are required, and consequently, are able,  
 both to ask it heartily, and to join our own  
 Endeavours with it : on which, together  
 with God's Assistance, our Holiness now, and  
 Happiness hereafter, most certainly depend,

S E R-

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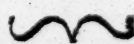
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*Mistakes about Man's Inability, and God's  
Grace, considered.*

## S E R M O N XIV.

2 C O R. iii. 5.

*Not that we are sufficient of our selves, to  
think any thing as of our selves : but our  
Sufficiency is of God.*

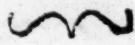
N my former Dicourse upon S E R M.  
these Words, I shewed you that XIV.  
it was the sole Design of   
St. Paul in them, to declare,  
that, in the setting about, and executing,  
the difficult and laborious Work of an *A-*  
*postle*, He did not arrogate to himself the  
Power, and Ability, and Success, which he  
had : but that he ascribed his Sufficiency for  
this great Work, as well as his being designed  
to it, to God himself, who was the great  
Contriver of the whole Scheme of Christia-  
nity ;



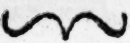
298 *Mistakes about Man's Inability,*

SERM. nity ; who miraculously called the *Apostles*  
 XIV. to the carrying forward his Design in it ;  
 ~~~~~ and who endowed them with Powers from  
 above for the Execution of it. This being
 laid down, as the true meaning of the *A-*
postle's Words ; I did from hence take occa-
 sion to examine and confute the Mistakes of
 such Christians, as have pretended to be led,
 by this and such like Expressions in the *New*
Testament, into such Notions of their own
 Weakness and Inability to perform the Will
 of God ; and of the part God Almighty is to
 bear in their Reformation and Amendment ;
 as induce them to indulge their vicious In-
 clinations, and retain their evil Habits, un-
 der the Pretext of waiting for the Interposi-
 tion of Heaven, and the irresistible Motions
 of God's Spirit : without which, they think,
 they can do nothing towards their Salvation ;
 and for the obtaining of which, they ima-
 gine that nothing can be done on their Parts.

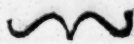
I HOPE, I then made it appear that what
 was said by St. *Paul* with respect to the
 Work of an *Apostle* in those Days, in which
 almost insuperable Difficulties attended it,
 ought not to be applied to the common Du-
 ty of all Christians, in the ordinary Course
 of

of God's Providence ; that St. *Paul* himself S E R M.
never spake of the Obedience of Christians XIV.
to the Moral Commands of the Gospel, af- 
ter such a manner as to give Encourage-
ment to any such Opinion, as that of some
who are not content with the Help of God,
but would willingly have all irresistibly done
by Him ; and that the Assistance afforded by
God to all the honest Endeavours of sincere
Christians, in the Gospel-Dispensation, is
so far from being an Inducement to them
to leave all to be effected by *that*, that it
is the most powerful Argument possible to
them to exert themselves to the utmost for
their own Good ; and made use of to this
Purpose by the *Apostles* themselves, and par-
ticularly by St. *Paul*.

AFTER this, I answered more particular-
ly to *Two Objections* : for the present, sup-
posing that in the *New Testament* there are
some Expressions which ascribe the whole
Work of Salvation to God, and represent
Men as dead and unactive in it. And I shew-
ed, either that those Expressions were de-
signed solely to give to God the Glory of de-
signing and contriving the Dispensation of
the Gospel, and the Work of Redemption ;
and

S E R M. and to describe the State of the World before the Gospel, buried in Sin, and without
 XIV.  any Prospect of Help, or any Possibility of such a Relief unless it had come first from Him: or, if any high Expressions of this sort be used concerning the ordinary Task of the Body of Christians, that they may be justly interpreted, by all the Rules of speaking, without recurring to so great an Absurdity, so destructive to the Cause of Virtue; and particularly that they must be explained by the Tenour of plainer Texts, which all represent a great deal to depend upon the Endeavours of *Christians* themselves, as well as upon the Aids of God's Spirit; and are constantly pressing the labouring part upon all who pretend to be in Pursuit of Happiness.

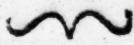
T H E R E is one more *Objection* which deserves a very serious Consideration in this Debate: and which, therefore, I design particularly to answer before I proceed; and that is this, that it is more for the Glory of God, that the whole Work of our Amendment, and Reformation, and Salvation, should be left to *Him*, than that any part of it should be claimed by our selves; and that
 upon

upon this Account it seems more probable SERM.
that it all depends upon his irresistible Arm ; XIV.
and more pious and humble for Men passively 
to permit it to do so. But all this is
founded upon Two Errors ; *first*, the not
judging rightly what is the true Glory of
Almighty God ; and *secondly*, the imagining
that to suppose Man capable of acting toge-
ther with God in this great Work, is to ex-
clude God from being the Original Foun-
tain of every thing : and therefore, may be
fully answered by some Observations, re-
lating to these two Points. And,

I. THE Glory of God is to be measured
by his Nature, and Attributes ; and by the
Declarations of his Word. If we consider
his *Attributes* ; we must fix nothing upon
him but what is perfectly consistent with the
united Harmony of them all. He is per-
fectly wise ; perfectly just ; and perfectly
holy. Now it is a greater Glory to his Wis-
dom, to make Creatures capable of Freedom
in their Actions, than to make only Clock-
work, and Machines, to be moved by the
immediate and constant Interposition of the
Artificer. It is a greater Glory to his Holi-
ness, (that Attribute by which He is repre-
sented

SERM. fented as a Lover of Virtue, and Hater of
 XIV. Vice,) to assist Men in their Endeavours
 after Perfection; than to force them to be
 perfect, whether they will or no. Nay, the
 contrary seems utterly inconsistent with the
 Supposition of his loving Virtue more than
 Vice. For if Virtue be not something, in
 some degree depending upon our selves;
 there is no reason why he should love it, as
 it is in us, more than the contrary. For Jus-
 tice requires that every one should be valued,
 and rewarded, according to what is in him-
 self good, or evil. Now, if Virtue be no-
 thing but the irresistible Operation of God
 upon us; there can be no Reason in the
 World assigned why he should hate and pu-
 nish a wicked Man, and love and reward
 another: because, as to themselves, they
 are exactly alike.

THE only difference here supposed is this,
 that God is pleased, after an arbitrary man-
 ner, to work upon one: and wholly to pass
 by the other. If any Parent should heap his
 Favours upon one Child, and then shew the
 greatest Fondness to him, merely because
 those Favours have been heaped upon him;
 and absolutely refuse to bestow the least de-
 gree

gree of the same upon another of his Chil- S E R M.
dren, and yet hate and punish him, because XIV.
he had not what he could not have with- 
out his Will; would not all the World
condemn such a Parent of the most partial
Fondness, and of the most arbitrary Pro-
ceeding; and attribute it to nothing but
Weakness of Understanding; or Strength of
Passion? And yet this is what we are not
afraid to lay upon Almighty God, when we
represent Him as doing all for some, with
an irresistible Arm; and then loving them
for what they have no part in: and, on the
other side, as passing by others, and refusing
them that same Strength, without which they
cannot move; and yet hating and condemn-
ing them for not being what they cannot be,
and not doing what they cannot do. If we
could not think of this in any Earthly Pa-
rent, without calling in question his Wis-
dom; or his true Regard to what is praise-
worthy: how can we fix it upon Almighty
God? It is indeed to call in question his
Wisdom; or his Impartiality; or his Love to
what is truly lovely; or his Aversion to that
only which is truly the Object of it. But
if a Father hath an equal Regard to all his
Children;

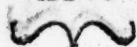
SERM. Children ; and is ready to assist them all in
 XIV. their honest Endeavours ; to put them in the
 way of pleasing him ; to encourage them to
 do it ; to deter them from the contrary ; and
 to reward, or punish them, according as they
 have voluntarily chosen to make use of, or
 to abuse, his Favours : This we account Wis-
 dom, and Equity ; and a true Notion of
 Virtue ; and a true Love to what is Praise-
 worthy ; and a true Abhorrence of what
 deserves Hatred and Discouragement.

WE cannot help having such Notions of
 Wisdom, Justice, and Holiness ; and if,
 whilst we have such, we can fix any thing
 upon God contrary to these ; we certainly
 rob Him of the Glory of what we constantly
 account Perfections ; and of what we ever
 esteem to belong to Wisdom, Equity, and
 Holiness. Let any one therefore think,
 whether it can be a Glory to God, to repre-
 sent Him as acting a Part amongst his Chil-
 dren, and Creatures, which we should se-
 verely blame in any Earthly Parent ? *If I be*
a Father, saith Almighty God, upon a dif-
 ferent Occasion, *where is mine Honour ?* It
 may be said, if God be a Father, and so
 thought by us ; where is the Regard to Him
 under

under this Notion, when that Conduct is SERM.
attributed to Him, which would not be seen XIV.
in an earthly Father, without great Detesta-
tion, and Abhorrence? If we think, therefore,
of God, as of a Being vested with all Perfec-
tion of Wisdom, Equity, and Holiness; we
shall find it greater Glory to such a Being,
to suppose Him assisting his Creatures in the
Way to Happiness; joining his Strength to
their Endeavours; and expecting their sin-
cere Endeavours to be joined to his Strength;
than to represent Him as doing all irresistibly
for them; and then loving them and re-
warding them, for what was forced upon
them whether they would or no: and, on
the other hand, as neglecting many others,
who could not stir one step without the same
irresistible Arm to work for them; and, af-
ter this, hating and condemning them for
lying in a State, in which they could not but
lie, unless He himself forced them out of it.
The one is the Glory of an equitable Distri-
butor of Favours, and Frowns; of Rewards,
and Punishments: the other is the Glory of a
Tyrannick and Arbitrary Mind, which raiseth
to it self Favourites out of Humour; and
loves and hates entirely at the Influence of

XPrejudice,

S E R M. Prejudice, and without Regard to any thing,
 XIV. but what is in itself base and unreasonable.



AND, as we should not fail to judge thus in the Case of any Earthly Parent ; so we cannot help it in the much higher Case now before us : nay, we must lose all Notions of good, and equal, and wise ; and leave off to speak of God at all, if we can think otherwise. If, therefore, we have any Regard to the Glory of God ; *the Glory due unto his Name* ; the Glory of his real and unalterable Perfections : let us not, under Pretence of making Him great and powerful, divest Him of Wisdom, and Equity ; let us not, under Pretence of making Him the sole Actor in the great Affair of Salvation, rob Him of the Glory which is much greater ; the Glory of regarding, and loving, and rewarding, his reasonable Creatures, (not according to mere Will and Power ; but) according to what degrees of good, and sincere, are in them ; and according to what depends, in some measure, upon themselves. What we call Virtue, if it be necessarily produced by an Agent distinct from ourselves, is not Virtue, nor commendable, nor rewardable, in us ; nor any more to us, than that
 Vice

Vice which is supposed as necessary in another. And if so, we cannot be loved, or rewarded by a wise and holy God, for what doth no more deserve Love in us, than the contrary. But Almighty God is wise, and holy, and equal; and certainly loves, and regards Virtue, as a thing Praise-worthy in us. From whence it follows that it is not so wholly his Work in us, but that He expects Labour from our selves; and looks upon it as depending in some degree, upon our selves: tho' always under the Influences of his good Spirit; which is ever ready to attend upon our sincere Endeavours.

AND thus, indeed, is He represented in *holy Scripture*; as delighting in the Man that doth his Will, and walks in the Paths of Virtue; and as abhorring the Man who acts a contrary Part: neither of which could he do, were it equally impossible to both sorts to be virtuous; and were He himself the sole Mover, and irresistible Worker, of all that is good. But,

2. THE other Consideration I mentioned was this, That the *Objection* I am now answering, is founded upon the Imagination that the giving to Man any part in his own

SERM. Amendment, and Salvation, implies in it
XIV. that it is not owing to Almighty God :

which seems to derogate from his Glory. Whereas, as I have before observed to you, Almighty God is not at all excluded by this Supposition. For Man, having no Powers, and being possessed of no Faculties, but what are originally owing to this great Creator ; he can arrive at no Happiness, but what He must acknowledge to be owing to that first Original of all his Powers, and all his Faculties.

To say, therefore, that Men can bear an active, and a voluntary Part, in their own Reformation, and Happiness, is not to derogate from God ; because it is no more than to say that God hath so made them, and endow'd them with such Powers, as that they are able to do something for themselves. It is not to detract from their Obligations to their great Creator, and Redeemer ; but it is only to shew what He hath made them capable of doing : and still the making of them so, is entirely his Work ; and all the happy Result of it, his Glory. Their Use of these Faculties is indeed made, in some measure, their own Work, and voluntary Part ; that
so

so it may make them the *Subjects* of Reward: SERM.
but the Grant of these Faculties is the crea- XIV.
ting Work of God ; ascribed to him ; and a
perpetual Fountain of such a Glory as He
delights in, when they are used well, and as
he requires them to be used ; and this a more
rational Glory, and a more worthy Honour,
than if He had made them only as *Machines*
to be Instances of his Power, and Arguments
merely of his Greatness. And besides, I am
far from contending that, in the present De-
generacy of Human Nature, these Facul-
ties can do all. For I maintain the Necess-
sity of God's gracious Concurrence. I am
only arguing that they can act together with
God's holy Spirit ; and that our Holiness
depends upon our own Labour, together
with the Assistance of That.

THUS much may suffice to shew the
Weakness of this *Objection*, which pretends
to sacrifice Virtue it self to the Glory of
God ; and to prove the Truth of this Propo-
sition, that it is the truest Glory to such a
Being as we are taught, by Reason and Re-
velation, to esteem Almighty God to be, to
have made Men capable, in some degree, of
a voluntary Motion towards Heaven and

SERM. Happiness; and to love and reward him for

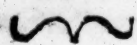
XIV. something which depends upon himself, as
 well as upon the friendly Assistance of God:
 which is still made equally necessary to his
 Attainment of *Christian* Perfection.

BUT because the Perverseness of habitual Sinners is such, that they are not only glad to lay hold on such Pretences, as I have already examined, to fortify themselves in Sin, which they love, and embrace, as the Effect of their unavoidable Weakness; but to argue from some other *Passages* of the *Scripture*, relating even to good Men; from which they hope for Comfort, and endeavour to flatter themselves that their present deplorable Condition is no worse a State of Weakness than what some in a very safe Condition have been in: I shall, therefore, before I conclude, take notice of *Two*, or *Three*, of these abused and perverted *Passages*.

I. THE *first* I shall mention, is That in *Prov. xxiv.* at the 16th ver. *For a just Man falleth seven times.* It is almost a Shame, indeed, to mention it: but that some have been so extremely weak as to lay hold on it, to administer Comfort to themselves in their falling into Sin. Nay, they generally cite
 it

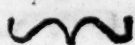
it thus, *The just Man falleth seven times* SERM.
a Day : whereas there is no such Word as XIV.
the last, either in the *Original*, or in any
Translation. I need only direct any one of
the most ordinary Capacity to the Passage,
as it lies in that *Chapter* : For whoever turns
to it will presently find that the *falling*, there
spoken of, is *falling* into Trouble, and Af-
fliction, and Misfortune ; and not into Sin.
For the whole Verse is thus : *For a just*
Man falleth seven times, and riseth up
again : but the Wicked shall fall into Mis-
chief. The Verse before is Advice to the
Wicked : *Lay not wait, O wicked Man,*
against the Dwelling of the Righteous ; spoil
not his Resting-place. For a just Man fal-
leth seven times, &c. It is designed plainly
to represent to us, that God preserveth the
good Man from the Attempts of the Wick-
ed ; and that the Wicked often fall into that
Mischief, which they design against the Righ-
teous. The *Verses* following do likewise
go on to speak wholly of Temporal Evils ;
and of falling into Affliction. The whole
Ground, therefore, of this Pretence is taken
away. For here is nothing said of the wil-
ful Sins of good Men ; but of their being

SERM. frequently afflicted ; and frequently supported
XIV. ed in, and raised out of, their Troubles.



BUT, supposing it were said, that even good Men are frequently, or sometimes, surprized into Failings : this can be nothing to those wretched Persons who indulge themselves in an Habit of sinning. For whatever Failings a truly sincere Christian may have been surprized into ; they always render him much more careful, and more arm'd against them, for the Time to come : whereas the Sinner is confirmed and settled more and more, in his wicked Course, by every Step he takes in the Paths of Sin. Nay, He aggravates the Guilt of his sinful Course, by making those Failings of good Men, which are their Grief, and the Arguments of the greatest Care and Caution to themselves, to be the Ground of Encouragement to him, in a careless, and supine Neglect of God's Laws. But,

2. ANOTHER as weak Pretence is founded upon that passage in the *Acts* of the *Apostles*, ch. xiv. at the 15th verse, where *Paul* and *Barnabas* say to the *Lycaonians*, *We also are Men of like Passions with yourselves* : from whence some have concluded
the n-

themselves to be in as safe a Condition as SERM.
 some of the best of Men ; even whilst their XIV.
 Passions and Lusts were in full Power. 
 Whereas, this Passage hath no relation to the
 Distinction between *good* and *bad* ; *passio-*
nate, and *well-temper'd* Men : but between
Men and *God* ; between *Human Nature*,
 and the *Divine*. It was spoken to deter the
Lycaonians from offering Sacrifice to *Paul*,
 and *Barnabas*, as if they were *Gods*. The
 Words in the *Greek* signify, We are Beings
 liable to the same Imperfections ; the same
 Sufferings ; and particularly to Death it self ;
 as you are. We are weak, and mortal ;
 even Men, as well as your selves : and there-
 fore, do not pay what you account Divine
 Honour, to us. Then follows immediately,
who preach unto you that you should turn
from these Vanities unto the living God.
 This again shews that the *Apostles* did not
 level themselves with these Sinners : for it
 would have been to no purpose to have en-
 deavoured to convert them, if, at the same
 time, they acknowledged themselves to be
 in the same Condition of *vicious Passion*
 and *indulged Sin*.

SERM. So that, whether we consider the Words
 XIV. themselves ; they were designed to signify
 nothing but that the *Apostles* were mortal
 Men, and not Gods : or the Circumstances
 of the Place ; they shew us that the *Apostles*
 were at the very time preaching to the *Ly-*
caonians the absolute Necessity of forsaking
 their Sins. How unjust, therefore, is it for
 a Sinner to lay hold on so foolish a Mistake ;
 and to chuse to fix the greatest Blot and Ab-
 surdity upon the *Apostles* themselves, rather
 than become truly good and virtuous.

3. ONE *Passage* more I shall just men-
 tion ; and that is, St. *Paul's* calling him-
 self, the chief of Sinners ; 1 Tim. i. 15.
Christ Jesus came into the World to save
Sinners ; of whom I am chief. Now who-
 ever turns to the 13th *Verse*, will find that
 he speaks there of himself, not in his pre-
 sent Condition ; but, before his receiving
 of the Gospel. For there he describes him-
 self, (the Sinner on whom Christ had Mer-
 cy,) as one who was before a *Blasphemer,*
and a Persecutor, and injurious : not that
 he was such an one at that time he spake
 this ; but before he was a *Christian.* So
 that this can administer no Comfort, but
 to

to one who hath left that sad Condition; SERM.
and is become what *St. Paul* at that time XIV.
was: who was to be an Instance of God's
Readiness to forgive the greatest Enemy,
upon hearty Amendment; but not whilst he
remains in that State of Enmity.

BESIDES, *St. Paul* speaks not this with
relation to a sinful and vicious acting against
the Dictates of his Conscience: but solely
with regard to his having been a Persecutor,
and Blasphemer, of the Christian Religion.
As for other Parts of his Conduct; he often
declareth that he was an exact Observer of
that Law of which he was then a professed
Disciple; and therefore this is not to be in-
terpreted of that which we commonly call
Vice and *Immorality*, in profess'd *Christians*.
But the Influence *St. Paul's* Example should
have upon *Christians*, should all be taken
from what he was after he was a *Christian*.
And thence let all Sinners learn their Shame.
For they will find him describing himself,
as an Example to all to whom he addressed
himself; and they will see Him to have been
as great an Instance of Labour, Humility,
Meekness, Charity, Piety, and every Vir-
tue, as ever blessed the *Church* of *Christ*.
His

SERM. His State, as he was a *Christian*, is what

XIV. Christians should regard : and in this, they
 will find him so perfect, that they will have
 but little Encouragement from hence to
 flatter themselves in those Vices which he
 abhorred ; or in that foolish Notion of their
 Weakness, of which his Example, as well
 as Precepts, is the greatest Confutation possible. If Men be Heathens, and Infidels indeed, they may learn from St. *Paul's* Example, that God will make Allowances for their Prejudices ; and accept them, whenever they sincerely comply with the Offers of his Gospel : but if they be *Christians*, they can learn nothing from his Example, but a continual Watching, and Care, *lest they become Cast-aways* ; and an Assurance, that they have Strength enough to be *Fellow-workers together with God*, in order to all things required for their Happiness, and Salvation.

BUT how unwilling do we find Men to think themselves able to bear any Part in what is good ? In the Paths of Vice ; in the Projects of Iniquity ; in the Execution of what is evil ; their Feet are swift, and their Hands strong ; and their Heads able :
 but

but when God's Will is to be performed ; S E R M.
nothing is so weak, so impotent, so unable XIV.
as they. Thus, if you ask a worldly-mind-

ed Man for a Gift of Charity, or true Generosity ; he often pretends Inability, and Incapacity ; whilst he hath enough to lay out upon any Trifle, or useless piece of Vanity ; or a great deal laid up, a Sacrifice to Covetousness, and Uselessness. The voluptuous Man hath Power and Spirit to encounter Difficulties without Number ; to watch incessantly ; to labour without Intermission ; to deny himself in many Instances, in order to come to some imaginary Pleasure : but if you speak of self-denial for the sake of Religion, or Virtue ; presently the Weakness of Human Nature is pleaded, and the Impossibility of undergoing the least part of the same Labour, for the sake of the greatest Good possible. If ever they think of Amendment, they desire to wait God's Time ; till his irresistible Arm moves them, against their Will. As for themselves ; they are dead, and without Life : unless it be to offend God, and provoke his Anger. Foolish and unwise ! to think that such Excuses can ever pass upon the Searcher of all Hearts ! to think that

their

SERM. their own wilful Habits will be an Apology

XIV. for their continuing in them! No, The
 more difficult we find it, the more immediately must we set about the Work: considering that the Difficulty hath been created by our own Folly, and Wilfulness.

LET us not, therefore, pretend Weakness and Inability, in a Case which should fire and animate us to do Wonders. Let us pray to God, in Sincerity, for his holy Spirit; and heartily labour, our selves, under its Directions, and Influences. Let us not think that a *vicious Inclination* is a better *Excuse* on one side, than the Dictate of a good Conscience is an *Argument* on the other. Let us not be so ungrateful to that God who is our Maker, as to think he frames and fits us for nothing but Sin; and leaves all that is good intirely out of our Composition. Let us not be so base, and ungrateful to our Redeemer, as to take occasion, from the Assistances offered us in the Gospel, to *continue in Sin*; and so blasphemous, as to neglect to do our Duty, under Pretence of consulting the Glory of God. But let us remember that our acting our Parts well, is his greatest Glory; and that

that the gracious Aids of his *Spirit* are the SERM.
greatest Encouragement to us to work out, XIV.
together with Him, our own Salvation : ~~~~~
Which God grant we may all do, &c.



the gracious will of his Father in the Son.
 greatly discouraging to us to work out,
 together with him, our own salvation. ~~~~~
 When God grants us grace, he

*The true, and false, Notions of Repentance,
considered.*

SERMON XV.

ACTS iii. part of the 19th Verse.

*Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that
your Sins may be blotted out.*



THE great Concern of all Christians is, so to pass through Things Temporal, that they finally lose not the Things Eternal : And the most important Enquiry in order to this, is that which leads us to the certain Knowledge of those *Terms* upon which God will pardon, and accept us. But though this be a Point of infinitely the greatest Importance of any that can come within the Thoughts of a Christian : yet there is no Point, in which Christians act a more careless, and surprizing,

SERM.

XV.

Y

Part

S E R M. Part than in this ; and none in which they
 xv. more willingly contribute to their own De-
 ~~~~~ ceit, and Ruin. Nor in any thing is this  
 more visible, than in those false Notions  
 which many give themselves leave to enter-  
 tain concerning the Nature of that *Repentance*,  
 to which they find the Promise of  
 Forgiveness to be annexed in the Gospel.  
 As it is our Duty, therefore, to put a Stop,  
 as much as we are able, to such mistaken  
 Apprehensions, as may endanger the Eter-  
 nal Happiness of Men ; so, I shall now en-  
 deavour it, in this Particular, in Pursuance  
 of what I have, in some former Discourses  
 attempted, in order to establish in our Minds  
 the true Notion of those *Terms* which are  
 required of us, in order to our final Accep-  
 tance with God. And,

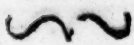
I. I SHALL endeavour to shew you the  
 true Nature of that Repentance, which is  
 of Force for the Remission of Sins. And,

II. FROM hence I shall make appear the  
 great Weakness of those mistaken Notions  
 of it, by which many Christians have been  
 deceived.

I. IN order to shew the true Nature of  
 that Repentance which is spoken of in the  
*New*

New Testament, I shall premise Two or SERM.  
Three Observations, Viz:

XV.

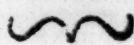
I. THAT our *blessed Lord*, and his *A-*   
*postles*, preaching to a World of Men, grown  
up in Heathen Impieties, and arrived at full  
Age, without such bright Light and Con-  
viction, as the *Gospel* brought along with  
it, constantly speak of *Repentance* in their  
Discourses to them, as the first Step towards  
their Acceptance with God. This We may  
see in the *Gospels*, and all thro' the *Acts* of  
the *Apostles*; that, when Heathens, or wick-  
ed Jews, are spoken to, and instructed what  
to do, in order to Salvation, the first Word  
generally is; *Repent*: as here, in the *Text*,  
St. *Peter* calls upon the *Jews* who had hi-  
therto *rejected the Lord of Life*, to *repent*;  
and that in order to their Being *converted*;  
as it follows. For the first Step that a vici-  
ous Man can take towards a Change of his  
Life, is to be truly sensible of the Unrea-  
sonableness of that Course of Sin and Ini-  
quity, in which he hath formerly lived;  
and to have due Sentiments of his past Be-  
haviour: because, without this due inward  
Sense of it, He can never heartily consent  
to forsake, and amend it; or, in the Ex-  
pression

S E R M. preſſion uſed in the *Text*, to be *converted*,  
 xv. or turned, from it. Thus in the *Second*

~ Chapter of the *Acts*, the ſame St. *Peter* exhorts the unbelieving *Jews*, *Repent and be baptized*. *Repentance* is the firſt Step: be-  
 cauſe, as I have already obſerved, without a Senſe of the Unreaſonableneſs and Wick-  
 edneſs of their former State, they could not poſſibly, with Sincerity, think it worth their while to *believe* in *Jeſus Chriſt*; and to be *baptized*, and entered, into his Religion, ſo different from their former Condition.

AND this being the firſt Step that could be taken by an unbelieving, or wicked Man; no wonder that this is pointed out as the firſt, in order to Salvation, or Remiſſion of Sins. Upon this firſt *Repentance* of Unbelievers, they were baptized, and by Baptiſm put into a State of Salvation; and a Capacity of being happy upon the Conditions of *Jeſus Chriſt*: and therefore this may well be ſpoken of, as the Road to Salvation, and Happineſs; becauſe without it there could be no entering into the *Chriſtian Dispensation*. This, then, is that *Condition* of Acceptance, which is chiefly ſpoken of thro' the *Gospels*, and the *Acts* of the *Apoſtles*;



*Apostles*; which give us an account of what SERM. was said to *Unbelievers*, and wicked *Jews*, XV. or *Gentiles*. But, 

2. THE next Observation I have to make is, that, as soon as this first *Condition* was complied with, and Men were persuaded by the *Apostle's* Preaching into a due Sense of their past evil Courses, and into a thorough Renunciation of them; that, as soon as they were, in consequence of this, entered into the *Christian Religion* by *Baptism*, and were professed Members of Christ's Body, the Church: that then, I say, all the Exhortations of the *Apostles*, and all their Persuasions, ran perpetually upon *Newness of Life*; upon *working out their own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; upon the Danger of falling back into their former State; and upon the Perfection of Virtue required of them. This is plain from the *Epistles*, written by the *Apostles* to professed Christians: which are full of the most pathetic Exhortations to all Virtue; and of the most severe Reprehensions of all Vice; and of the plainest Condemnations of Christians, who are wilful Sinners, to the greatest Degrees of God's Displeasure.

SERM. So that from your Observation of what  
 xv. you read in the *Acts* of the *Apostles*; and  
 ~~~~~ of what you find in their *Epistles*; you cannot but make these Two Conclusions: That *Repentance* is the Subject of their Sermons, when they are preaching to unbelieving, or wicked, *Jews* and *Gentiles*; in order to persuade them to leave off their former Behaviour, and come over to the Christian Religion: and that, after they are Christians, they are with the same Earnestness pressing upon them the absolute, indispensable, Necessity of all Holiness and Virtue; as they were before inculcating the Necessity of their renouncing their former State of Infidelity, and Vice. The frequent mention of *Repentance* is made to those who were not already Christians: but to Christians, the Practice of all Virtue, and the positive Improvement in all that is good and Praiseworthy, is vehemently recommended. But,

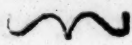
3. THO' this be so in fact; as will appear to any one who will compare the Preaching of the *Apostles* to *Unbelievers*, with the *Moral Rules* and Instructions given to *Believers*; yet I must observe that there was place found for *Repentance*, in favour
 of

of such professed Christians as wilfully fin- SERM.
 ned, upon their giving evident Tokens of xv.
 the Sincerity of it. But then, there was no ~ ~ ~
 other Token of it supposed to be sincere
 but actual Amendment, and Reformation ;
 without which it is evident, from the Te-
 nor of all the *Apostles* Declarations, in their
Epistles, that there was no Hope of Ac-
 quittance at the last Day of Accounts. Thus
 the sinful *Corinthian* was restored to Peace ;
 not till He was in danger of being *swal-*
lowed up with over-much sorrow, 2 Cor. ii.
 7 ; and after much more Difficulty, and
 Severity of Discipline, than was used in ad-
 mitting the *Repentance* of one who had not
 before professed himself a Christian. If any
 one who was *called a Brother*, i. e. a Chri-
 stian, was an habitual Sinner ; His Com-
 pany was to be avoided by other *Christians*,
 as one whom they were not to own for a
 Christian, in those Days when it could be
 done, 1 Cor. v. 11. But this was upon
 Supposition of the Person's not amending
 his Life : for it is evident that, upon the
 Tokens of a sincere Amendment, He was
 admitted again to Hopes of Happiness. *Let*
him that stole steal no more, was the Me-

SERM. thod which St. *Paul* prescribed in the Case
XV. of the Sin of Theft : *Ephes.* iv. 28. which
~ implies in it, that Amendment is the Sum of
the *Repentance* of a Christian ; and that,
upon that Amendment, He is in a safe
Condition.

I COULD give more Evidence of this
from the first Records of Christianity : but
this one Argument is sufficient, which I
have heretofore enlarged upon ; viz. that
the Gospel would in vain profess to bring
Salvation to mortal Men, if every wilful
Deviation from the Rules of Virtue were
so unpardonable, that no future Amend-
ment were sufficient to entitle the Sinner
to the Forgiveness of what was past. For,
as to forgive Sinners without actual Amend-
ment and Reformation, would be to en-
courage them to continue in Sin : so, ab-
solutely to deny Forgiveness to every wilful
Sin, tho' sincerely repented of, and for-
faken, would be to drive Men by Despair
into the same State of Sin ; and to defeat
the Designs of the Gospel. And therefore,
we may be sure that, as nothing but Amend-
ment, and future Holiness, can entitle a
Christian

Christian to Forgiveness of his past Sins ; S E R M.
so these most certainly will do it. XV.

THUS then the Case stands. The  unbelieving World of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, were supposed by the *Apostles* to be great and wilful Sinners : and therefore, *Repentance* was the first thing spoken of, to them. Believers, or Christians, entered into, and solemnly engaged in, the *holiest* of all Institutions, were not supposed by them to be *Wilful Sinners* ; or to continue in those Sins which they had renounced at *Baptism* : as the *Apostle* himself argues, *Rom. vi.* And therefore little mention is made to them expressly of *Repentance* ; but much of living worthy of their Profession, and of fulfilling all the Laws of Morality, and Virtue, in the highest degree possible. But if any of them were overcome by Sin, and tempted to transgress the Rules of their Institution ; Amendment was required and accepted, for the sake of that *Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

WHAT, therefore, remains for us, who are professed Christians, to do, in this Matter ? Certainly, We are not to look merely
to

SERM. to that which was recommended to *Jews*
 xv. and *Gentiles*, as the first Step only towards

~ Happiness : but to those Injunctions laid upon such as became professed Christians ; and to the Methods prescribed to Them. And then, we can never mistake in this great and important Affair : because we can never think our selves at liberty to dispense with that Holiness, and Perfection of Virtue, which is constantly press'd upon Christians. If therefore, we take in the whole of this Matter ; and consider *Repentance*, with relation to professed Christians, who have been Sinners ; as something which will entitle them to God's Favour ; it must certainly equally suppose and imply in it these following Parts:

1. AN hearty Sorrow and deep Concern, for all past Transgressions of the Laws of God.

2. AN unfeigned Disposition of Mind, opposite to that of Sin and Wickedness, and tending to fulfil his Will. And,

3. AN actual avoiding, or resisting, those Temptations, by which they have been formerly over-powered ; and an actual Practice of the contrary Virtues.

I. WITH

1. WITH respect to the *first* of these; SERM. XV.
all are willing enough to admit that *Repentance* must suppose and imply it; because a little Sorrow, and a short-liv'd Passion, will cost them little Pains, and Trouble. The lowest Notion of *Repentance* takes in that of being sorrowful; and having a tender Disposition of Mind, for the present, whilst that Sorrow lasts. About this, therefore, there needs no Debate; because this is the part of *Repentance* which the weak side of Human Nature is the most pleased with. But,

2. THERE must be a Change of Disposition within. The Word used in the *New Testament* signifieth an Alteration of the Purpose, and Frame, within.

ST. *Paul* reckons not Sorrow a part of Repentance; but Repentance an Effect of Sorrow: 2 *Cor.* vii. 10. *For godly Sorrow*, (and that is the Sorrow, we are now speaking of) *worketh Repentance to Salvation, not to be repented of.* It worketh such a Disposition of Mind, as manifestly shews what it is that produceth it. If any Person be concerned, and sorrowful at any thing that hath pass'd him; it never fails to work

SERM. work in Him a Disposition leading to the
 xv. contrary for the Time to come. And, if
 you consult the Movements of your own
 Minds, you must find that a true Concern
 within, at any past part of your Conduct,
 is never without a firm Thought, and Dis-
 position, contrary to that which hath caused
 that Regret, and Concern, in you. If this
 be so, in all other Cases; we may depend
 upon it, it is the same in this now before
 us. If we be truly sorrowful, and heartily
 concerned, that we have offended God, and
 sinned against his Laws; this will certainly
 be accompanied with as sincere, and as
 hearty, a Disposition to please Him, and
 obey his whole Will for the Time to come.
 And it cannot be supposed to be a sin-
 cere Sorrow without this. Nor is this all :
 for,

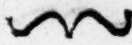
3. THIS Sorrow, and this Change of
 Mind, if they be sincere, must unavoidably
 produce a Course of Behaviour contrary to
 that which caused this Sorrow, and this
 Disposition: and if this be not the Effect
 of them, they are of no Account; unless
 it be to increase the Condemnation of those
 who pretend to them. Thus *St. Paul*, in
 the

the forecited *Seventh Chapter* of his *Se-* SERM.
cond Epistle to the *Corinthians*, Verse 10. XV.
 declareth, that *godly Sorrow worketh Re-*
pentance to Salvation, a Repentance not to
be repented of: perhaps the Words more
 properly signify, such a *Repentance* as im-
 plies in it no occasion for *Repentance*, af-
 terwards; such a *Repentance* as implies in
 it a Conduct and Behaviour, of which there
 is no reason to repent. And He goes on,
 in the next Verse, to prove their Sorrow
 for having offended to be sincere, and ge-
 nuine; not from their Words, but from
 their Actions and Behaviour: by which
 only it was that He judged that they *sor-*
rowed after a godly sort.

BUT what need I appeal to Him? We
 our selves are Judges of this Matter, if we
 be not foolishly partial to our selves, by
 our intimate Acquaintance with the Springs,
 and Frame, of Human Nature. There are
 none of us all, who, in the Case of other
 Persons, do not constantly judge of the
 Bent of their inward Thoughts, and the
 Sincerity of their outward Professions,
 by their Actions and Behaviour; and by
 these only. In any Matters that concern
 our

SERM. our selves, we never take the Professions
xv. of others concerning their inward Dispo-
~ sitions towards us, to be the true Repre-
sentations of them, unless we see the Fruits,
and Effects, which, in such Cases we can-
not help judging, would follow upon such
Dispositions of Mind. How then can we
possibly think our selves sincere in our *Sor-
row*, and inward *Repentance* towards God ;
whilst we see them void of those good
Effects, by which only they are as cer-
tainly known amongst Men themselves, as
a good Tree is known by the Fruit it pro-
duceth ?

AND if we proceed in our Enquiries,
and examine farther into the Constitution
of our own Natures ; we shall find that all
the Powers and Faculties of our Minds were
given us for no other Purpose, but to re-
gulate our Behaviour, and Conduct ; and
that they are all of no account, but as tend-
ing, and employed, that way. We never
think any Persons arrived at the use of their
inward Faculties, till they are fit to act, and
shew themselves in the World : and we ne-
ver judge any to be prudent, or impru-
dent ; mad, or sober within ; but by their
2 outward

outward Conduct and Demeanor. What SERM.
signify all our inward Powers? Of what XV.
Importance is it, to judge and determine, 
within our own Minds; to reflect and cen-
sure our own Actions; unless it be in or-
der to have an Influence upon them? As
sure, therefore, as it is, that any Person
hath a Power within, to judge which way
of Action is best: so sure is it, that this
Power could be given for nothing, but to
determine his Actions the best Way. As
sure as It is that we have, all of us, a Con-
science, or Reason, to direct us before we
act, and to applaud, or condemn us after-
wards: so sure is it, that this hath solely
a respect to our Actions, and Behaviour.
If, therefore, we cannot but reflect with
Sorrow, and Concern, upon some part of
our Behaviour; which we find contradicto-
ry to the Laws of Reason, and of God: it
is certain that this very Power of Reflexion
was designed to influence our Behaviour
for the Time to come. For, to be sor-
ry for any part of our Behaviour, im-
plies in it that it was unbecoming, or sin-
ful; and to account it unbecoming, or
sinful, implies in it that it ought never to
be

SERM. be practised again : and so it cannot be, but
 xv. that this inward Affection must be designed
 ~~~~~ for the Alteration of what is amiss in us.

AND if to this we add a Consideration, or *Two*, upon the Nature of *Almighty God* ; we shall find it yet more certain. For, his Nature being all Perfection ; there cannot be an higher Indignity offered to Him, than to suppose that our Sorrow, or Grief, which is, in the degree of it, Misery it self, is for its own sake acceptable to Him. No, If we think rightly of Him ; we cannot but think that bare Sorrow is what He rather dislikes, than likes : but that it is that *godly Sorrow* only, which worketh Amendment, and Alteration, that is approved of by Him. Can our Grief, or Sorrow, advantage Him ? Or, can any thing of ours affect Him ? No, But it is only, as our Grief may advantage our selves ; and as our Sorrow may lead us to avoid all Occasions of such Sorrow for the Time to come ; that it can be well-pleasing in his Eyes.

WILL you then judge from the Nature of Man ? You see, all the inward Movements of his Mind are calculated for  
 nothing



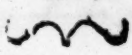
nothing but to influence and govern his SERM.  
Behaviour: and so, a *Sorrow* without an XV.  
Effect of it upon his Life, must be as in-  
significant, in his own Account, as the Fa-  
culty of Reasoning itself, separated from  
all Effect upon his Conduct, and Behavi-  
viour. Or, will you judge of this Matter  
from the Nature of God Almighty? He  
cannot take any Pleasure in our Sorrow;  
but as it tends to our real Joy and Happi-  
ness. It can be of no account in his Eyes;  
but as it makes us better, and wiser, for the  
future.

OR lastly, will you judge of it from  
the great Design of Christianity? How  
unworthy must you think it of God, to  
send his Son into the World, to live, and  
dye, in order to lead Men to a bare, pre-  
tended, Sorrow, and Grief for their Sins?  
Is it not the doing his Father's Will, which  
He presseth upon his Disciples? Is it not  
declared, that the *Grace of God appeared*  
*to Men in the Gospel, to teach them to*  
*deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts; and*  
*to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in*  
*this World?* And is it not to contradict  
all this, in the most flagrant manner, to

Z

imagine

SERM. imagine that the End of Christ's coming  
xv. could be, to lead Men only to a little vain  
empty Sorrow? That is, to lead Men to  
what doth, in its own nature, aggravate  
their Guilt, if they stop at it, without pro-  
ceeding any farther. Aggravate their Guilt,  
I say: for when we are sorrowful on Ac-  
count of our Sins: this Sorrow supposeth  
in it that we ought not to commit them;  
and that there is a foul Evil, and Guilt in  
them: and this tacit Acknowledgment that  
their Nature is foul, and evil, and makes  
us guilty before God, cannot but help to  
condemn us for returning to what we our-  
selves think so Blame-worthy. So that  
when we have Opportunity to do better,  
and do not; but return again to the same  
Sins that we think deserve, and call for,  
our Sorrow; we are self-condemned.  
The Sorrow, by which we hope to cover  
them, must help to make them the more  
meritorious of Punishment: as it implies  
in it Self-condemnation, and an Acknow-  
ledgment of Guilt. But when it leads to  
Amendment, and a gradual Increase in Vir-  
tue; then only is it the Parent of good  
Fruit, lovely in the Eyes of God, and plea-  
sing

sing in the Reflexion of the Man himself. S E R M.  
How plain, therefore, is it, if we will but XV.  
consider Things, as they truly are, in their   
Nature, and Consequences, that the Repen-  
tance of Christians, who have been Sin-  
ners, necessarily implies in it, an actual for-  
saking of their Sins, and an actual Progress  
in all Virtue, and Godliness of living.

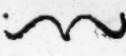
II. HAVING thus given as true, and  
as plain, an Account, as I could, of the  
*Repentance* which alone can avail any pro-  
fessed Christians; I shall now only make  
*Two* or *Three* short *Inferences* from what  
I have laid down, with respect to those  
*mistaken Notions*, by which many Chri-  
stians deceive themselves in this Affair.  
And,

I. FROM what hath been said we see  
the Vanity, and Misery, of those who place  
their Hopes of Acceptance with God, up-  
on the Sorrow, and Grief, which they  
sometimes conceive for their Sins; and  
call by the Name of *Repentance*, because,  
in our Language, when we are sorry for  
any past part of our Conduct, we are said  
to repent of it. If a Man, proposing to



SERM. Himself to travel to a Place at some distance from his present Station, should conclude himself to be arrived at it, when He had set but one step out of his own Home ; and there make a full Stop, contented, and satisfied that this would be sufficient : would you not think such a Person distempered in his Brain ? Why, just thus it is in the Case we are considering. We pretend to be travelling towards Happiness : and Repentance, in all its Parts, is the Road to this Happiness. The *first* Step, in this Road, is *Sorrow* for our Sins. He that stops at this Sorrow, therefore, and rests himself contented with it, stops at the first Step in his Journey : and how likely He is to arrive at his Journey's End, you may easily judge.

2. THUS again, if the second Step be a good Disposition of Mind to go forwards ; He that stops, without putting in Execution this Disposition, is still as unlikely to arrive at the End proposed. This is another *Mistake* of Men in this Affair, that a present good *Disposition*, and *Resolution* of Mind, is sufficient for their Purpose. But certainly, it is not going one Step, or

two Steps, that will bring us to the End SERM.  
of our spiritual Journey; but the pro- xv.  
ceeding as far as Time, and Strength, give  
leave. 

3. FROM what hath been said, we are led not to place any Hopes in what we call a *Death-bed Repentance*: For this *Repentance*, extorted from us by the Prospect of Death, can be only a Sorrow for Sin; perhaps rendered more passionate by our present Fears. And this being only Sorrow, and Compunction, and perhaps a good Resolution; it is plain that still these are only the first Steps in the *Repentance* of a Sinner; and not complete *Repentance*, in all its parts. I confess these are not ill Signs: but it ought plainly to be declared that Sorrow, and good Words, are not the End of the *Gospel Institution*; but an holy Life and Conversation. Indeed, where a Person hath had no Calls to Repentance and Amendment before; but been inevitably blinded by unhappy Circumstances of Education, and hardly known what the *Gospel* pretends to: if such a Person be awakened by his Danger into serious Enquiries, and an hearty Con-

SERM. viction of the Truth of the Gospel ; and  
XV. a great Detestation of his former Courses;  
~~~~~ one might reasonably hope good Things.  
But in the Case of most professed Christians, who are called, day after day, to Amendment, and have all the Arguments imaginable represented to them ; and yet, day after day, shut their Ears ; spend all that time and Health, which God allows them, in Vice and Iniquity ; and then at last are sorry for this, when God thinks fit to try them no longer : In such Case, I say, all that can be said is, that they are sorrowful for their Sins ; and that if that Sorrow be sincere, they are got one Step towards Happiness. But to give greater Hopes ; or to say that they are the Christians whom God hath declared, He will accept, in his Gospel, is to render vain all the Threatnings of his Son ; to place the Sinner and the Saint upon equal Terms ; to put all upon a Man's having a little longer Sickness than his Neighbour : and to undo the great Design of reforming Men's Lives, the only End worthy of the Son of God's Incarnation.

THE Result of the whole, is this. Since *Almighty God* hath plainly declared, in his Gospel, what it is He expects of those, who have been Sinners; I need not tell you, how great a Weakness, and how extreme a Folly, it is, to have recourse to vain, and flattering Hopes of our own. Since we are Christians, and have a Gospel open to us, to have recourse to, upon this Occasion; it is the greatest Weakness imaginable to consult our own Passions and our own Lusts, what it is fit for us to hope for, at the Hands of God. And yet, I am persuaded this is the Case. Were not Men inwardly captivated to some Vice; Covetousness, or Ambition, or Sensuality; there would not be any thing, in the nature of Things, more evident to themselves, than that *Almighty God* cannot be supposed to accept any Thing at our Hands, without a sincere Amendment of what we know, and acknowledge, to be amiss in our selves. And yet, such is the Effect of our own evil Habits, and the Prevalence of our beloved Vices; that we first desire, and at last come really to hope, to be accepted for some superficial Circum-

S E R M. stance, without a real Reformation of our
XV. Lives.

~ BUT how long will Men thus deceive themselves, in a Case in which all Deceit is the Ruin of Soul and Body for ever ; and in which they can impose upon none but themselves ? *Behold, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?* This was plain under the Law. How much more plain under the Gospel ? As we are *Christians*, we are not so much as supposed to be Sinners. But if, we have transgressed against the plainest Light ; God is so merciful as to allow a Place for Reconciliation to his Favour, upon our Amendment. Is this so hard a Condition ? Is this so great an Injury to us, that we should turn against it, and abuse the *Gospel* to our own Destruction ? *Shall the Goodness, and Long-suffering of God, instead of leading us to true Repentance, only lead us to a false Image of it ; and to treasure up Wrath to our selves against the Day of Wrath ? Shall we continue in Sin ; and pretend that Sorrow for it is sufficient ? God forbid !*
How

How shall we, Christians, who, by our S E R M.
Profession, are dead to Sin, live any longer xv.
therein? Let not such an Use be made ~~~~~
of our great Lord's indulgent Kindness to
us in the Gospel: but let all who know
what *Repentance* is, and what it implies
in it, live worthy of that *Repentance*, by
which they hope for Salvation; and of
that *Vocation wherewith they are called*.

IN a word: If you will have your *Sins*
blotted out; you must *repent, and be con-*
verted, in the Words of the *Text*: that
is, actually turned from them. If you have
been wilful, habitual Sinners; and think
of being saved by *Repentance*; here is the
Line marked out. The *first* Step is *Sor-*
row for your Sins: but it is but the *first*.
The *second* is a Disposition to amend your
Lives. But there is no stopping here. You
cannot think this Sorrow, and this Disposi-
tion, sincere, unless they shew themselves
in good Effects. There must be an actual
Amendment; an actual entring upon, and
Progress in a virtuous and holy Life;
whilst God gives Opportunity. Without
this, there is not the least Security of Hap-
piness:

346 *The true, and false, Notions, &c.*

SERM. pines: and, if you trust to any other
xv. Methods, you rely *upon other* Terms than
~~~~~ what are proposed in the Gospel of Jesus  
Christ.



S E R M O N

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*The Example of the Thief upon the Cross,  
considered.*

## S E R M O N X V I.

LUKE xxiii. 42, 43.

*And He said unto Jesus, Lord, Remember  
me when Thou comest into thy Kingdom.*

*And Jesus said unto Him, Verily, I say  
unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in  
Paradise.*

 H E S E Words contain in them SERM.  
VI.  
an Account of the happy End-  
ing of the Life of *one* of those  
*Malefactors*, who were crucified  
with our blessed Lord. For, tho' we read,  
in *Two* other of the *Evangelists*, that the  
*Thieves*

SERM. *Thieves which were crucified with Him, re-*  
 XVI. *viled Him ; yet, that we are not necessarily*  
 ~~~~~ to understand this of *both the Malefactors*,  
 is evident from the like Form of Speech
 used by the same Writers, concerning any
 Matter, the minute Circumstances of which
 they do not undertake exactly to relate.
 Thus, in the same *Gospels*, *that* is sometimes
 said to be spoken by the *Disciples*, to *Jesus*,
 which was spoken by *one* of them only :
 because it was not thought necessary to be
 more particular. And the *Plural Num-*
ber is often thus used for the *Singular*,
 either, when the Story related is so known,
 as that no Mistake can proceed from thence ;
 or, when the Matter spoken of, is of that
 nature as not to admit a literal Interpre-
 tation without a gross Absurdity ; or, when
 the *Historian*, as I have said, doth not un-
 dertake to relate every particular Circum-
 stance of a Story, especially of one generally
 and universally known at the Time of his
 writing. On these Accounts, this Way and
 Figure of speaking hath been allowed and
 practised.

BUT St. *Luke*, designing, in this part of
 his History, to be more particular, hath
 transmitted

transmitted it down to us that what the SERM:
other Evangelists record concerning the *Ma-* XVI.
lefactors, is to be understood only of *one* of 
them; and that the *other* was of a much
better Disposition; that He reprov'd his
Fellow-Sufferer for his rude and unjust re-
viling; and laid hold on that Opportunity,
to confess a great Degree of Faith in a cru-
cified Saviour.

THE favourable Reception which this
penitent Believer met with, in his last Mo-
ments; and the comfortable Answer which
He received from our Lord, seems to have
had an Effect, quite contrary to what our
Lord intended, and wished, upon many
Christians of later Ages. And therefore,
this part of the *Evangelical History* deserv-
eth our particular Consideration: that We
may judge truly what is to be concluded
from it: and avoid any Mistake that may
prove fatal to our Eternal Interest. And,
after having, in my last Discourse, laid down
the true Notion of *Repentance*; I cannot
do any thing better than to endeavour to
obviate, or refute, the common Error, re-
ceived and embraced by too many, *viz:*
that the Acceptance of this Malefactor is
an

SERM. an Encouragement to any Christians to
 XVI. place their Hopes of Salvation, upon a
 ~~~~~ *Death-bed Sorrow*, which they mis-call by  
 the Name of Repentance. In order to this  
 End,

I. I SHALL endeavour briefly to give  
 a true and just Account of the Case of this  
*Malefactor*, who was thus mercifully re-  
 ceived by our Saviour, in his last Mo-  
 ments.

II. I DESIGN to shew that this was  
 not an extraordinary Act of Favour, out  
 of the General Rule; nor any thing de-  
 pending on the secret Will and Intention  
 of Almighty God: but perfectly agreeable  
 to the professed and declared Tenour of the  
 Gospel-Covenant; and what any Person,  
 in the same Circumstances, may claim, up-  
 on the exprefs *Terms* of the *Gospel*.

III. IN order the more effectually to  
 prevent all Mistake, I shall point out to  
 you, and describe, the Persons who are in  
 the same Circumstances; and may be as  
 certain of Favour as this *believing Malefac-  
 tor*. And,

IV. I SHALL endeavour plainly to shew,  
 the extreme Unreasonableness, and great  
 Danger,

Danger, of the common Mistakes about SERM.  
this Instance of God's Mercy ; and the Va- XVI.  
nity of those Pretences which are built by   
some Men, upon this Example.

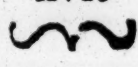
I. I SHALL endeavour briefly to give you a true and just Account of the Case of this *Malefactor*, who was so graciously received by our blessed Saviour, in his last Moments.

AND here, there is no reason to doubt but that He was a Person who had never enjoyed, before this, a fair opportunity of hearing a just Account of our blessed Lord, and his Actions, and Pretensions: it being much more likely that a Person of his sort of Life should first hear and consider, the Character, and Works, and Behaviour of our Lord, during his Imprisonment, than at any time before, whilst He was following his wicked Trade of Robbery. It is manifest from his own Words, as well as to his Fellow-Sufferer, as to our Lord himself, that He had gotten some Knowledge, both of our Lord's Personal Character ; and of his professing himself a King. Now, the Way of Life which he followed, before his Imprisonment, engaged him to keep as  
much



S E R M. much out of the Cities and Places of ordinary  
 XVI. Conversation ; as much out of the  
 ~~~~~ Eyes and Observation of the World, as He  
 could possibly do ; and consequently must
 necessarily be supposed to have hindered
 him of all fair Opportunities of knowing
 the Truth concerning our blessed Lord.
 But, just before his Crucifixion, He could
 not well avoid hearing the Rumours spread
 about concerning Him, and learning the
 true Character, and Pretensions of our Lord.
 And He seems to have weighed all that He
 heard, before his Crucifixion, so well, as
 to bring with Him to his Cross, a Resolu-
 tion to profess himself his Disciple ; and a
 sincere Disposition to shew himself such, in
 all respects possible, in that small Remain-
 der of his Time.

FROM such a Resolution as this, such
 a Person as He might well have been re-
 moved by the Behaviour of his Fellow-
 Sufferer ; and by that Current of Affronts,
 which at that time ran so violently against
 our Lord, now seemingly destitute of all
 Help from *God*, and condemned and out-
 raged, as an Impostor, by *Men*. Or, at
 least, He might have been led to have con-
 tented

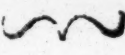
tented himself, with entreating our Lord, SERM.
tho' somewhat more seriously than others, XVI.
to come down from the Cross, and to save 
himself, and his Fellow-Sufferers. But He
appears to have understood a great deal, in
a very little Time, concerning the true
Nature of Christ's Kingdom: and so, ac-
knowledging the Heinousness of his own
Sins, and the Justice of God in his Punish-
ment of them; all that He desires of our
Lord, is, that He would remember Him,
when He should come into his King-
dom.

THIS Malefactor, therefore, you see,
cannot be supposed, in the former Course
of his Life, when his evil Designs kept
him out of the City, and out of Society,
to have had any Opportunity of enquiring,
or hearing, concerning our blessed Lord.
But after his Imprisonment, it is very pos-
sible, and very probable, that He came to
a Knowledge of our Saviour, and of his
Offers to Mankind. It is certain, from the
express Words of the *Evangelist*, that, on
his Cross, He gave Testimony to the un-
spotted Character of our Lord; and Proof
of his believing the Truth of his Preten-
sions.

SERM. fions. And laying these Things together,

XVI. his Words to our Saviour may reasonably
 ~~~~~ be supposed to imply in them as much, as  
 if he had said thus: “ I believe that thou  
 “ art truly the Messiah, and Saviour of  
 “ the World; as thou professest thy self  
 “ to be: And, notwithstanding this thy  
 “ ignominious Death upon the Cross,  
 “ that thou hast a glorious and happy  
 “ Kingdom to enter upon; though not of  
 “ this World. I take this Opportunity of  
 “ professing my self thy Disciple: which  
 “ is the first I have enjoyed. This I do,  
 “ amidst the Reproaches of thy Enemies,  
 “ and the Insults of my Fellow-Sufferer.  
 “ And, therefore, I beg that I may have  
 “ the Benefit of this my Profession; and  
 “ may be accepted by Thee, as thou hast  
 “ promised to accept all such as do sin-  
 “ cerely believe in Thee, and to acquit  
 “ them from the Guilt of all their former  
 “ Sins for the sake of this Belief.” This,  
 I say, may most reasonably be supposed to  
 be implied in the Words of this *Malefac-*  
*tor* to our Lord: it being certain from the  
*History* that He had enquired both after  
 the *Character*, and after the *Proposals*, of  
 our



our Lord; and found the *former* to be un-SERM.  
spotted; and the *latter* to be Offers of XVI.  
Mercy, and Happiness, in his Kingdom, to   
his Disciples.

It appears, therefore, that He was one, who was called to the Knowledge of *Jesus Christ*, in the last Hours, and had no Opportunity of professing his Belief in Him, but in the last Minutes, of his Life; when the *Night* of Death was just coming upon Him, in which *no Man can Work*: one, who believed, as soon as He possibly could hear a true Account of our Lord; and courageously professed his Belief, as soon as He had Opportunity to do it; and this at a time when all about him were reviling Him. In short, He did whatever it was in his Power to do, during that Space of Time, which He had left, after He was called to the Knowledge of the Gospel: and therefore, was accepted to Favour by our blessed Lord; and a Promise was made Him, that he should immediately upon his Death, be in an happy Place with Him. And here, you will easily observe that this gracious Acceptance of him was not merely, or chiefly, on the account of his Sor-

SERM. now for his past Sins; but for the sake of  
 XVI. his believing in *Jesus Christ*, as soon as  
 he could; and of his taking this first Opportunity of professing himself his Disciple; that is, for the sake of his doing all he could to manifest the Sincerity of his Faith, from the Time of his believing, to the End of his Life. And this leads me to the *second* thing which I undertook to shew; viz.

II. THAT this was not an extraordinary Act of Favour, out of the general Rule; nor any thing depending upon the secret Will, or unrevealed Pleasure, of *Almighty God*: but perfectly agreeable to the professed, and declared, Tenour of the Gospel; and what any Person, in the same Circumstances, may claim, upon the Promises of God, sufficiently promulgated in the Gospel. This I would willingly make as plain as possible, because this Instance of the Thief on the Cross hath been generally interpreted as an Instance of Almighty God's professed Acceptance of the Sorrow of a Sinner at his Death, instead of the Practice of Holiness, and Virtue, during his Life: and, under this Notion,  
 hath

hath been so recommended to the guilty SERM.  
Consciences of the most habitual Sinners, XVI.  
as to give them as strong an Assurance of  
God's Favour, on their Death-beds, as the  
best of Christians can in reason possess;  
and so applied to themselves, by wilful Sin-  
ners, in the Time of their Health, as to  
encourage them to place all their Hopes in  
the bitter Sorrow of their last Moments,  
instead of rectifying the Disorders, and  
Wickedness, of their Lives. But that this  
all proceeds from a mistaken Notion of this  
Matter, will appear to you, by proving, as  
I design under this *second* Head, these Two  
Particulars; *viz.*

1. THAT it is highly absurd to imagine  
that Almighty God should, by any such  
publick Instance as this, profess to the World  
that He doth, on any account, or in Mercy  
to any Person, depart from those Measures  
which He hath, as publickly, fixed, and  
promulgated. And,

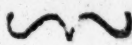
2. THAT this Instance, as I have  
before represented it, is perfectly agree-  
able to the *Terms* of the *Gospel*, offered  
equally to all who hear of it; and plain-



SERM. ly laid down by Christ, and his Apo-  
XVI. stles.

W I. I SAY, it is highly absurd to imagine that Almighty God should, by any such publick Instance, as this of the Thief on the Cross, profess to the World that He doth, on any Account, or in Mercy to any Person, depart from those Measures, which He hath, as publickly, fixed and promulgated.

W HETHER any Being be obliged, in the nature of the thing, to execute his Threatnings in their utmost Rigour, as he is to perform his Promises to the utmost; is another Question. Nay, whether it may not be actually so, in fact, at last, that Almighty God will remit of that Punishment he hath threatned; and not execute the utmost of that Wrath which He has declared by his *Son* against harden'd impenitent Sinners, is a Point wholly distinct from that before us. I must own that the affirmative side of this Question seems to derogate from the Sincerity of the Divine Revelation; and not well to consist with the Nature of the highest Simplicity: it being a much worthier Supposition

position concerning Almighty God, that S E R M.  
he should declare the exact Truth of the XVI.  
Matter, and leave it to work upon the   
Minds of Men as far as it could; than  
that he should declare what will never  
come to pass, and so endeavour to work  
upon them by a false Persuasion, which  
hath nothing in Nature to answer it. But  
I say that it is not so absurd to maintain  
that so it may possibly, or probably, be  
found at last; as to say that Almighty God  
hath declared, by any public Instance, that  
he doth, in the Case of some of the most  
notorious Sinners, depart from the Mea-  
sures which he hath openly declared he  
will stand to.

To come to the Case before us; Al-  
mighty God declareth, as plainly as Words  
can declare any thing, that *without Ho-  
liness no Man shall see the Lord*: that  
his *Wrath shall be upon all the Workers  
of Iniquity*; especially upon such as pro-  
fess his Gospel, and yet live in an open  
Violation of the Laws of it, and an  
open Neglect of these Declarations in it.  
And yet, this Instance, of the Thief on  
the Cross, hath been sometimes so inter-

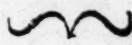
SERM. preted, as to make Almighty God declare  
 XVI. by it to the World, that he will accept  
 ~~~~~ of the Death-bed Sorrow of a Sinner;  
 though he hath had sufficient Warning
 through his Life; though he hath been
 a professed Christian, and hath had the
 fairest Opportunities of knowing the true
Terms of Christian Justification. Now
 this, I say, it is absurd to imagine con-
 cerning Almighty God: because this is
 publickly to destroy the Effect, and De-
 sign, of his other Declarations; and to
 give as public an Encouragement as pos-
 sible, to Men, to continue in their
 Sins.

FOR, when once a Man hath entertain-
 ed this Notion, that the Case of this *Male-
 factor* is thus to be interpreted; how easy
 is the Passage of his Thoughts from this,
 to the Imagination, that his own Sorrow
 on his Death-bed shall, after the same
 manner, be accepted, instead of a religi-
 ous and virtuous Life? For, why should
 he not think so? Or, what should hin-
 der? Almighty God must not be supposed
 an arbitrary Being; a Power acting by Hu-
 mour, and not guided by just and equita-
 ble

ble Maxims : but equal in his Regards to SERM.
all, in Circumstances exactly equal. And XVI.
if so, his Proceedings, upon those Max-
ims, must be the same with all in the
same Condition. He hath no respect to
the Persons of Men : nor can there be
any Reason in the World assigned, why
he should deal, in the Distribution of his
Eternal Rewards or Punishments, more
favourably with one, than with another,
who is not under the Circumstances of
greater Guilt, at his Departure out of this
State. And, therefore, if he hath shewn
such Favour to one of the vilest of Sin-
ners, on account of a pungent Sorrow,
at the Hour of Death, contrary to the
seeming Tendency of all his Declarations ;
so will he likewise to me, may the vilest
of Men still say. And what can be the
Consequence of this, but an impenitent
Life, and profligate Manners, in the Time
of Health ?

AND thus far, indeed, I agree with
such Persons, that whatever the Case of
this *Malefactor* was ; all who are exactly
in the same, or a like, Case, may reason-
ably expect, and will certainly experience,
the

SERM. the same Favour which he did. But the
XVI. Supposition, that Christians, who have Repentance and Amendment, day after day, inculcated upon them; who stand out against all Calls to Reformation; and rely at last upon the Sorrow of a sick Bed, are in the same Case with this *Malefactor*; or that he, considered as in the same Case with them, is declared in the *New Testament*, to have found Favour with God, and to have been entitled to the Happiness of Heaven: This Supposition, I say, will be ever incredible to us, till We can come to suppose Almighty God declaring against his own plainest Declarations; and ruining his own Design of the World's Reformation; or else acting after an arbitrary and humourfome manner; accepting of one Man to Eternal Life, and condemning another to Eternal Death, who is, as to himself, in the same Circumstances; and hath been led, by this Example, to expect the same Acceptance. But who can suppose this of the God of Mercy, Truth, and Equity? Or, of that God, who hath revealed his Wrath against all the Workers of Iniquity? But,

2. As these Absurdities should affright- S E R M.
ten us from fixing such a Procedure upon XVI.
Almighty God ; and make us rather wil- 
ling to suppose our selves wholly mistaken
in our Interpretation of this Dealing of his
with the Thief on the Cross, than to sup-
pose any such Inconsistencies in his Ways :
so, I must observe that there is another very
good Account to be given of this Matter,
perfectly agreeable to the Tenour of the
Gospel, as the *Terms* of it were plainly
preached by our Lord and his Apostles ;
and vastly distant from any such Interpre-
tation, as that which I have now been
mentioning.

IN order to make this evident, I must
observe to you that it is the declared Tenour
of the Gospel, that God would justify all
who sincerely comply with the Offers of it,
and heartily profess Faith in *Jesus Christ* ;
that all, I say, who do thus, upon good
Motives, shall be released from the Guilt
of their former Sins, and accepted by God,
and dealt with as just Persons, for this very
believing sincerely in his Son Jesus Christ ;
and this, whether they live a short, or a
long, Time after their first Belief and Pro-
fession ;

SERM. feſſion ; provided they ſhew the Reality of
XVI. their Faith in that Time, and do not relapſe
~~~~~ into a Courſe of Infidelity, or Wickedneſs.

Thus, we find, our Lord, in the Gospels, receiving to his Favour, all who embrace his Offers ; and accepting them, upon their firſt Acceptance of his Religion, and his Terms. And we find, more evidently, the *Apoſtles* inſtructed by the Holy Ghoſt to preach the Doctrine of Acceptance, and Remiſſion of all their former Sins, to all who ſhould lay hold on the Opportunity offered them, and embrace the Faith of Jeſus Chriſt, and enter themſelves into his Service. Upon this *Faith*, and Profeſſion of it, Proſelytes were baptized ; and they were baptized for the Remiſſion of their Sins ; and Juſtification before God was openly promiſed, and declared, to them, upon this their firſt ſincere, and undisſembled Faith.

Now, ſuppoſing any of theſe Perſons to be taken away immediately : their former Sins being once pardoned, the Force of this Pardon muſt remain ; and they muſt be finally acquitted and juſtified before God. But ſuppoſing any of theſe Proſelytes to live, and afterwards to relapſe into their former  
Course

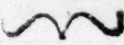
Course of Sin : They not only, by the TERMINATION of the Gospel, lose all the Benefit of this first Justification ; but can have no Ground for Hope of a final Justification, at the great Day, without the actual Amendment and Reformation of their Lives. On the other hand, if they go on, in living as becomes Christians ; they are entitled to a final Acquittance, and to great Degrees of Happiness in the World to come.

THERE are, therefore, Two sorts of Persons, considered as acquitted in the Gospel. 1. Such as hear the Gospel ; and sincerely receive, and heartily accept it ; and openly profess it : who yet have no Time allowed them, by the Providence of God, to bring forth the Fruits of a continued Course of Righteousness ; though they certainly have such a Faith as would bring forth these Fruits. And, 2. Such Persons as sincerely receive it ; and close in with the Terms of it ; and, having Time allowed them, live, and act, in the general Course of their Lives, by the Rules of Righteousness, laid down in it. As there are, likewise, Two sorts of Persons condemned, in the same Gospel. 1. Such, as having Opportunity

SERM. opportunity to hear it proposed to them, ei-  
 XVI. ther revile and persecute it ; or refuse to  
 attend to it, and receive it. And, 2. Such  
 as, having heard it, receive and profess it ;  
 and enter themselves into the Bonds of it :  
 but afterwards relapse into an Habit of Sin,  
 in which they continue till Death overtake  
 them.

THERE being, therefore, Two sorts of  
 Persons, to whom Acquittance, or Justifica-  
 tion, is openly promised in the Gospel ; we  
 may be sure, no one shall be denied that  
 Favour, who belongs to either of the Two.  
 And that the Malefactor on the Cross, cer-  
 tainly belonged to the former sort ; and  
 consequently, was accepted by Christ, not  
 by any arbitrary, or extraordinary Act of  
 Favour, but upon the ordinary Terms of his  
 Dispensation, is, I think, very evident. For  
 it appears that He was a Person, who, when  
 He had a fair Opportunity, did seriously  
 consider the Character, and Pretensions of  
 our Lord ; who, upon that Consideration,  
 believed in Him, and received him, as the  
 Messiah ; and who took the first Opportu-  
 nity He had, to declare and profess this :  
 though He had no Hopes of any Benefit  
 from

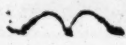


from hence, unless in a future State; and S E R M.  
was rather discouraged from it, than incited XVI.  
to it, by the Tempers, and Behaviour, of   
all about Him. He was called to the  
Knowledge of the Gospel: He obeyed that  
Call; and He did whatever was in his Pow-  
er, during the short Time God afforded him,  
to demonstrate the Sincerity of his Faith.  
What should hinder, therefore, but that he  
should be received by our Lord, who came  
to offer Acquittance, and Justification, to  
all who should believe him to be the  
*Messiah*; and should act agreeably to the  
Faith, and Practice enjoined by him, du-  
ring the remainder of their Lives, whether  
long, or short?

I CANNOT, therefore, but think it  
plain from hence, that there is nothing ex-  
traordinary, or new, in this Instance of the  
Justification of the Thief on the Cross: that  
he was not declared to be accepted by God  
on the account of his Sorrow, or because he  
was dying, and at that time expressed a  
Sense of his Sins; but because he laid hold  
on the first fair Opportunity, which offered  
it self, of believing in Christ; of profes-  
sing himself his Disciple, and of owning  
Him

S E R M. Him for his Master ; and, consequently, that  
XVI. he was accepted to Favour, upon the ordinary Terms of the Gospel, declared in  
~ other Places of the New Testament, upon which any other sincere Believer, would likewise have been accepted and justified ; and upon which, all Christians inherit the same Justification, and reap the Fruit of it, if they do not, by falling again into a Course of Sin, and continuing in it, forfeit their Title to so great a Blessing.

W H A T hath been said may likewise serve to give us some Account why the other Evangelists might not think it necessary to be minute, and particular, in the Relation of the Behaviour, and happy End, of the better of the Two Malefactors : *viz.* because nothing material could be learnt or drawn, from it, but what might be learnt from other plain Parts of the Gospel ; that whoever should believe in Jesus Christ, and make use of the Opportunities He enjoys to profess and shew himself to be sincerely his Disciple, should, upon that Belief, and Profession, be acquitted from the Guilt of all his past Sins ; and be put into a State of Favour, and Acceptance,  
with

with God; whether He should live a long, SERM.  
or a short Time, after his embracing the XVI.  
Christian Faith. And now, what hath   
been already laid down will easily guide us  
to determine what I proposed in the *third*  
place: *viz.*

III. WHO those Persons are, that may  
safely argue, to their own Comfort, from  
this Example of the Thief on the Cross;  
and may be as secure of God's Favour, as  
He was. And it is plain, they must be  
such, as are in his Circumstances. I do not  
mean, such as are leaving this World: for  
that was but an accidental Matter; and  
had no Weight towards his Acceptance;  
which I have shewn, must have been the  
same, upon the Gospel Terms, whether  
He had then been dying; or not. But I  
mean, such Persons, as do not resist the  
Evidence of the Gospel of Christ; but re-  
ceive it upon due Consideration; and take  
the Opportunity, offered them by the Pro-  
vidence of God, to profess their Faith in  
Jesus Christ, and to acknowledge them-  
selves his Disciples. They must be Persons,  
who being come to Years of Discretion,  
have a fair Opportunity offered them of  
B b hearing



SERM. hearing the Evidence, and knowing the  
XVI. Nature of the Christian Religion. They  
must be Persons who, upon hearing and  
weighing this Evidence, do sincerely accept  
it as the Will of God; who openly and  
heartily, profess this; and who, during the  
rest of their Time, behave themselves agree-  
ably to their Profession.

AND we cannot but observe from  
hence, of how small Concern, the Instance  
now before us is to Persons bred up in  
the Knowledge of the Christian Religion;  
called upon, day after day, to regard the  
Nature and Obligations of it; to Persons  
who have always professed themselves Chri-  
stians; and yet live on, in an Habit of Sin  
condemned by their own Profession, in  
hopes that the Sorrow of their latest Mo-  
ments shall atone for the Vices of their past  
Lives.

IF, therefore, any one would entertain  
himself with any just Hopes, drawn from  
God's Mercy to this crucified Malefactor;  
He must first, in all reason, consider, whe-  
ther He himself be in the like Circum-  
stances: for otherwise, what Comfort can  
any Man, in his Senses, draw from thence?

And

And no one, I think, can, by any means, SERMON.  
be said to be in the like Circumstances, XVI.  
who is come to Years of Judgment, and  
Discretion, in a Country of professed Chri-  
stians; and hath, either in his Mind, or  
in his Manners, dishonoured, or neglected,  
the Christian Religion. But this will more  
naturally come under the next Head of my  
present Design: which I have not now  
Time to prosecute.

I SHALL only, therefore, add at pre-  
sent, that for us, who are called betimes to  
the Knowledge of Christianity; who have  
Opportunities of knowing our Duty; and  
profess our selves, from the beginning of  
our Lives, the Disciples of Jesus Christ; for  
us, I say, to have recourse to any such In-  
stance as this, in order to defer our Repent-  
ance and Amendment, is the Extremity of  
Folly, and Weakness. Whatever it is, that  
makes us easy in the habitual Practice of  
any of the Vices condemned in the Gos-  
pel, is certainly a Cheat and Imposition  
upon our selves: a false and groundless  
Amusement. And, therefore, from whence-  
soever it is, that we may have drawn any  
such Notions; we may assure ourselves,

372 *The Example of the Thief, &c.*

SERM. (and it is our Eternal Interest to be assured  
XVI. of it,) that we are greatly mistaken in them.

~~~~~ Almighty God doth, as certainly and as plainly, require of us the Practice of all Righteousness, as He promiseth us all Happiness. No Man ever was uneasy at the Review of such a Practice: but many a Man hath been rendered miserable on his Death-bed here; and will be eternally undone hereafter; by trusting, in the Time of his Health, to any other false and faithless Methods. And God grant that We may consider these Things, before they be hid from our Eyes! *Amen.*



SERMON

*The Example of the Thief upon the Cross,
considered.*

SERMON XVII.

LUKE xxiii. 42, 43.

*And He said unto Jesus, Lord, Remember
me when Thou comest into thy Kingdom.*

*And Jesus said unto Him, Verily, I say
unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in
Paradise.*



IN my last Discourse, (which SERM.
was upon the Account given XVII.
us, in these Words, of the
happy Ending of the Life of
one of the *Malefactors* crucified with our
blessed Lord,) I proposed *four* Heads:
three of which I then went over; and

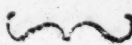
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shall

SERM. shall now proceed to the *fourth*, after I
 XVII. have made way for it, by reminding you
 of what I then, as I hope, very evidently
 proved.

IN discoursing on the *first*, I shewed you, that this *Malefactor* was one who, as soon as He had a fair Opportunity of knowing the Truth concerning the Character of our blessed Lord, and of hearing the Evidence of his Pretensions, did sincerely lay hold on it; and profess himself his Disciple: and behave himself as such, amidst the Calumnies and Reproaches of all about him: and that for this Belief, and Profession; not merely, or chiefly, on account of his Sense of his past Sins; He was accepted, by our Lord, to Mercy.

UNDER the *second* Head, I went on to shew you, that it was one professed part of the Gospel, preached both by Christ and his Apostles, that whosoever should lay hold on the Opportunity offered by the Providence of God; and should accept of the Terms proposed in the Gospel; and believe in Jesus Christ with an honest and sincere Heart; and make open Profession of this Belief: that every such Person,
 I say,

I say, should be accepted to Favour; and SERM.
effectually acquitted from the Guilt of his XVII.
past Sins, whether He should live a short, 
or a long, Time after this Profession; sup-
posing Him, to behave himself, during that
Time, agreeably to it. And, in conse-
quence of this, I proved to you that this
Thief on the Cross, having sincerely laid
hold on the Opportunity offered to Him
by Providence; having come to the Know-
ledge of our Lord's Character, and of the
Evidence he gave of the Truth of his Di-
vine Mission; and having, upon this, pro-
fessed himself his Disciple, and shewn his
Sincerity by behaving himself, in all respects,
as became such an one, during that short
Time which was allowed him, after He
was called to the Knowledge and Faith of
Christ; that this Malefactor, I say, hav-
ing acted thus, was accepted upon the or-
dinary, known, *Terms* of the *Gospel*; not
upon the secret and hidden Will of Al-
mighty God deviating from, or going be-
yond, the common Rules of the *Christian*
Institution; and that, therefore, this is no
Instance of Almighty God's Acceptance of
the Sorrow of a dying Man, instead of the

SERM. Practice of Virtue during his Life; much
XVII. less, an Instance of his Acceptance of those,
~~~~ on the Account of their Death-bed Sorrow,  
who have known and professed the Christian Religion through their whole Lives, and have wilfully and habitually lived in express Contradiction to its Design, and its Precepts, during the Time of that Profession.

UNDER the *third* Head, I shewed you that those Persons only are in the Case of this Malefactor, so as to argue to their own Satisfaction, from his Example, upon any reasonable Grounds, who, whether living or dying; whether in perfect Health, or within the Prospect of Death; lay hold on the first fair Opportunity offered them; and seriously consider the Evidence there is for the Christian Religion; and sincerely receive it upon that Evidence; and openly profess themselves the Disciples of Jesus Christ; and behave themselves, as becomes his Disciples, through the remaining part of their Lives, whether long, or short. And such Persons as these, I need not again observe to you, would have been

been entitled to the Justification, and Fa-<sup>S E R M.</sup>  
vour, promised in the Gospel, upon the <sup>XVII.</sup>  
plain and express Words of our Lord and  
his Apostles; whether there had been any  
such Instance, as this of the believing and  
penitent Malefactor, recorded in the Gos-  
pel, or not.

HAVING thus recalled to your Minds  
what I have already advanced, I may with  
the more Advantage proceed to the *fourth*  
thing which I proposed, *viz.*

IV. To shew plainly the Extreme Un-  
reasonableness, and great Danger, of the  
common Mistakes about this Instance of  
God's Mercy; and the Vanity of those Pre-  
tences which some Men have built upon  
this Example. And here I shall mention  
particularly the Mistakes of Two sorts of  
Persons: *viz.* The Mistake of those who  
misapply this Instance to their own Ruin;  
and the Mistake of those who take occasion  
from it to implant in others very wrong,  
and very pernicious, Notions, concerning  
*Despair*, and *Presumption*.

I. FROM what hath been said, it mani-  
festly appears how great, as well as fatal  
a Mistake

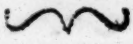
SERM. a Mistake that is, which some Persons have  
 XVII. persuaded themselves to entertain, from  
 ~~~~~ this Instance of the crucified Thief: that  
 God will accept them at last, for the sake
 of a Death-bed Sorrow and Concern for
 their past Sins; though they have been,
 all through their Lives, professed Christians,
 and have neglected to obey those Laws,
 which they knew to be imposed upon them
 by the Christian Religion, as the Rules of
 their Actions. The Weakness and extreme
 Folly of arguing at this rate, from this In-
 stance, will appear plainly to any one, who
 will seriously consider the Case of such pro-
 fessed Christians; and compare it with
 what hath been before said concerning the
 Case of that Malefactor, and the Condi-
 tions of Acceptance laid down in the Gos-
 pel.

FOR it is evident, from the Account
 which I have given of both these, that His
 Case was such as comes within the pro-
 fessed Terms of the Gospel: upon which
 all who lay hold on the Opportunity given
 them; and hear, and receive, and pro-
 fess, the Christian Religion sincerely; are
 4 accepted

accepted immediately to Favour, and re-SERM.
leased from the Guilt of their former Sins. XVII.
Whereas the Case of such professed Chri-
stians as I have been now speaking of, is
a condemned Case, upon the professed
Terms of the same Gospel. For if the
Gospel saith any thing at all, it plainly
affirms this, that those Persons, who af-
ter they have received the Faith of Jesus
Christ, and been made Partakers of this
first Justification, do relapse into a Course,
or Habit, of those Sins which are con-
demned in the Gospel; and continue in
that Course till Death overtake them: that
those Persons, I say, who do this, shall be
excluded the Kingdom of Heaven; and,
instead of God's Favour, shall feel his
Wrath, and suffer the Vengeance of Eter-
nal Fire. Now, as Almighty God did,
in forgiving and accepting the believing
Malefactor, keep exactly to the Terms,
which our blessed Lord had, in his Name,
promulgated: so, there is all the reason
in the World to conclude that, in con-
demning and punishing that other sort of
Persons, who have contradicted and scan-
dalized

SERM. dalized his Gospel, by their Behaviour
XVII. during their Christian Profession, He will
likewise keep close to the Terms which
He hath, in the Gospel, set before the Eyes
of the World. And in this Gospel, there
is another Law promulgated, as the Rule
of Judgment in the Case of such Persons.
They are called to the Knowledge of Christianity ; they have time allowed them to
live in the Practice of its Precepts, and by
that means to secure, and encrease, their
future Happiness : and yet they transgress
its Commands ; and, to all their repeated
Affronts to God and his Laws, they add
the Assurance of imagining, and expecting,
that He will deal with them, as He
deals with Men, who sincerely receive, and
profess the Christian Religion ; and do
whatever they can, in that shorter Time
which is allowed them, to demonstrate the
Sincerity of their inward Belief, and outward
Profession.

ALMIGHTY God doth all his Works
with the most exact Proportion : nor can
it easily be imagined that perfect Wisdom,
and perfect Power, can do otherwise.
And

And there is no doubt, therefore, but that S E R M.
He will dispense his Rewards and Punish- XVII.
ments, with the greatest Equity, and Im- 
partiality. Now can it be consistent with
any Rules of Equity and Proportion, to
make those equal in a State of Retribu-
tion, whose Cases, and Behaviour, have
been vastly different, in a State of Tryal?
But, besides this it is sufficiently declared
to us, in the Name of Almighty God, that
He will very much consider, what Light
hath been afforded; what Powers Persons
have enjoyed; what Time hath been al-
lowed them; what Improvement they have
made of this Light; what use they have
made of these Powers; and how they
have spent this Time, that they have had
granted to them. And though He will
very favourably deal with those who en-
joy lesser Degrees of Light, and Power;
and no happy Opportunities of Improve-
ment; as Equity requires: yet this is
far from shewing that He will be equal-
ly favourable to those who have enjoyed
greater Advantages, and happier Opportu-
nities; and have made no other use of
them,

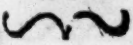
SERM. them, but to affront and dishonour both
 xvii. God, and Religion, the more. On the
 contrary, the only Ground of his Favour
 to the former sort, being their want of
 Light, and Opportunity; this rather implies
 in it, that where he hath afforded Light,
 and Opportunity, there He may justly, and
 will certainly, require a strict and severe
 Account of the Use and Improvement that
 have been made of them.

INDEED, in the *Parable* of the *Labourers* hired, at several Hours, into the
 Vineyard, *Matth.* xx. 1. some have been
 apt to think that the Method of Proceed-
 ing is such, as to encourage Christians to
 depend upon what they shall be able to do
 in their last Moments; and to hope, on
 the account of that, to be made equal, in
 the Favour of God, to those who have
 served Him faithfully, through their whole
 Lives; and so, to conclude that it is no
 great Matter, how long soever they defer
 their Repentance. This *Parable* I shall,
 therefore, in my next Discourse, distinctly
 and fully consider. At present, I shall only
 observe, that it was chiefly intended to fig-
 nify

nify to the *Jews*, that Almighty God S E R M.
would make the *Gentiles* equal to them, in XVII.
all Privileges, if they did, in the *last Age* ~~~~~
of the World (as the *Gospel-Age* is called)
accept the Invitation given them; and be-
lieve, and obey, the Doctrine of the Gos-
pel: which Interpretation wholly takes a-
way the Ground of the Objection. And,
as far as it can be supposed to concern par-
ticular Persons, I must observe, that it can
only signify that God will reward all such
with his Favours, as do, whenever they
are called to the Knowledge of the Gospel,
heartily embrace it, and readily obey the
Precepts of it, how little Time soever be
allowed them for so doing.

BUT can any one, though never so wil-
ling to be imposed upon, in this Case, find
out, I will not say in this *Parable*, but in
the whole *New Testament*, any Reward
for those who are called to the Knowledge
of the Gospel in the beginning of their
Lives, in the first Hours of their Day; and
yet either refuse to come in, upon so gra-
cious an Invitation; or else, professing to
obey that Call, and entering themselves in-
to

SERM. to his Religion, and pretending to accept
XVII. the Terms offered by our blessed Lord, not
~ only prove useless and negligent of their
Lord's Honour and Service : but even spend
that Time which is due, upon their own
Contract, to the Service of their Master,
in ruining his good Designs ; in dishonour-
ing his Name ; in abusing their Fellow-
Servants ; or in some other sort of Practice,
detrimental to their Master's true Interest,
or inconsistent with the Office which they
have taken upon themselves ? Where do
we read of any such Servants as these, re-
warded and honoured, at last, by their Ma-
ster ? Whenever we meet with the mention
of any such in the *Gospel*, it is with a very
sad Conclusion, at the End of their Story :
and this merely for not improving the
Talents committed to them ; for the neg-
lecting to do God positive Service in their
Stations ; for not using the Opportunities,
and Abilities, put into their Hands by Provi-
dence, for their own Eternal Interest, and the
Honour of their great Master ? How much
more shall this heavy Sentence be pronoun-
ced upon such as not only have not impro-
ved

ved the Time, and Abilities, and Advan- S E R M.
tages, put into their Hands; but have like- XVII.
wise used this Time, and these Abilities, 
and Advantages, which God in mercy hath
afforded them, to the Disservice of Himself,
and the Disgrace of his holy Religion; do-
ing very great Mischief by their Example
and Influence; affronting God, and ma-
king his Enemies to blaspheme? Where
do we read, all through the Gospel, of any
such Person, after a Continuance of Af-
fronts and Indignities offered to Almighty
God, during his Christian Profession, ac-
cepted at last to Mercy, on Account of the
Sorrow of his dying Hour? That which
hath, most of all, inclined Men to be de-
ceived in this Case, is the Instance of the
crucified Malefactor; and this Instance, we
have now evidently seen, to be at the great-
est distance from any Likeness to the *Case*
of such as are professed Christians, and live
on, in a Course of Sin, under the Influ-
ence of so groundless an Expectation. How
great, therefore, as well as fatal, must the
Mistake of those be, who being Christians,
and having many and continued Opportu-

SERM. nities of living worthy of that Name, still
 XVII. continue wilfully in their Sins ; and argue
 ~~~~~ themselves into a fond Expectation of God's  
 Mercy at last, from an *Instance* which bears  
 no manner of relation to the Condition, and  
 Circumstances, in which *They* are ?

2. I SHALL now mention another Mistake, which is usually founded upon the Instance of the crucified Malefactor : and that is, the Mistake of those, who do not, indeed, make any ill use of it in the Conduct of their own Lives ; but yet make use of it, to encourage the *Presumption*, and prevent the *Despair*, of dying Sinners, who have lived all their Lives long, in the Profession of Christianity, and in the Violation of its Laws ; and this, to the great Prejudice of other Christians who survive them. This Mistake, I confess, as far as it is founded upon this Instance, is so much the same, with the former, in the Ground of it, that it can hardly be reckoned as distinct from it : and it hath been sufficiently confuted, under this View, by what I have said, upon the *former*, to shew that this *Instance* toucheth not the Case of such professed Christians.

ans. But, as it is applied to another Pur-SERM.  
pose; and as it is not only founded upon XVII.  
this Example of the *crucified Malefactor*,  
but upon very wrong, and groundless, No-  
tions concerning *Presumption* and *Despair*; it seems to deserve a particular, and distinct place, in the present Debate, as it will give occasion for the settling the true Nature of those Two Dispositions of Mind: the misunderstanding of which hath certainly been the reason of representing what is generally called *Despair*, as the greatest of Sins; and of making what is truly a *criminal Presumption*, to be a necessary Duty.

Now here I shall lay down one Proposition, which is sufficient to determine this Matter: *viz.* That these Two Dispositions of Mind must be judged of, by the professed Terms of the Gospel: and not by any supposed Possibilities. And, according to these, I think it is evident that for One who hath, against all the Calls of God's Spirit, and all the Checks of his own Conscience, continued to live in a constant Course of Sin; for such an one, I say, to hope, with any sort of Assurance, that God will bring him



SERM. to the Happiness, promised in the Gospel  
XVII. only to Holiness and Righteousness, is not a  
virtuous Hope ; because it is an Hope without any Ground, or solid Foundation : but is a vain, and groundless *Presumption* ; and such a *Presumption*, as seems, in truth, to affront Almighty God, by supposing that He will depart, for this Man's Sake, from his own declared and professed Terms. And, on the contrary, for such an one to *Despair* ; that is, to think that He, having continued through the Time of his Health, and Conversation in the World, an habitual Sinner ; and being that wicked Man, whom the *Gospel* constantly, and in multitudes of Passages, condemns ; that He, I say, being such an one, shall be condemned at the great Day, as the *Gospel* saith : This is indeed his Misery ; but is so far from being his Sin, that I do not see, if He believeth the *Gospel*, how He can possibly avoid thinking so. But, as if it were of no Importance to be guided by the Declarations of the *Gospel* it self, in this great Affair ; dying Christians, who have lived a Life of habitual and wilful Wickedness, have been  
led

led into such Notions of these Two Things, SERM.  
that they have come to think this ground- XVII.  
less *Presumption* their Duty: and, what is  
of worse consequence, many By-standers  
have been fatally corrupted into a Securi-  
ty in sinning, by the same Expectations  
from this unreasonable Confidence in God.  
Whereas there is nothing in this Confidence  
that can alter, or affect, the Nature of  
Things: nor is there any Passage in the  
whole *New Testament*, which recommends  
such a *Confidence*, in such Circumstances;  
or which implieth in it, that it is the Duty  
of such Persons, or any Advantage to them  
in the Eyes of God, to be confident of those  
Mercies, of which, in truth, He hath so-  
lemnly declared they shall never partake.

IT is true, that many of the best sort  
of Christians may, in a low and afflicted  
Condition, entertain an unreasonable and  
groundless Despondency, or Despair. They  
may imagine that they have not been those  
Christians, who shall be rewarded at last;  
and be filled with very melancholy Appre-  
hensions concerning their future Condition.  
But this Imagination of theirs cannot affect

SERM. their future State : which will be determined by that God who knows all things as they are ; and will deal with them, according to what they really have been ; not according to what they imagine themselves to have been. And this Imagination, proceeding from an Excess of Humility, or from bodily Disorder, is only their present Unhappiness ; not their Sin : and is removed far from them, as soon as they themselves are removed out of this State. Whereas the *Despondency* of those professed Christians, who have resolutely continued wicked to the last, is truly well grounded upon the Gospel-Declarations ; and, as it is so, is likewise part of their Punishment, begun in this World, in the inward Torment of their own Minds : which, if it might be removed from them, upon any Promise, or Declaration of God, I should most willingly do it. But who would dare to incite them to assure themselves of the Favour of that God, who hath so plainly declared, that They shall not see his Face ; and that He will be to such Sinners *a consuming Fire*.



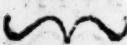
NAY, is it not to bring a lasting Dis- SERM.  
grace upon the Cause of Virtue, to teach xvii.  
that the confident Assurance of the most  
profligate Sinner, when He comes to die,  
(perhaps, a more confident Assurance than  
the best of Christians commonly have,) shall  
set him as much out of the reach of God's  
Displeasure ; and in as secure a Condition ;  
as that of the most virtuous Persons, who  
have spent their whole Lives in the Con-  
templation, and Practice, of the Laws of  
Christianity. The *Gospel* is far from saying  
any such thing : and, therefore, the *Preach-  
ers* of the *Gospel* must likewise be far from  
entertaining the Consciences of Christians  
with any such Fancies ; who, if they have  
any Sense themselves, will not easily swal-  
low such unreasonable Doctrines.

I GRANT, indeed, that the best thing  
which the most wicked of Christians can do,  
when they come within View of Death ;  
and what all about them ought to encour-  
age them to do ; is to make themselves as  
sensible, as they possibly can, of the Evil of  
their past Ways ; to move themselves, upon  
the best Considerations, to abhor and de-

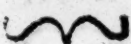
SERM. test them : and solemnly to warn all about  
XVII. them from the Paths, in which themselves  
~~~~ have walked. But, after all this, who could  
say that these Persons have come up, in any
tolerable degree, to the Terms of the Gospel ? Or, who could encourage any such
notorious Sinners to assure themselves of the
Mercy of God, unless a plain Text of Scripture, or Law of Reason, could be found,
suitable to their Case, or promising them
Happiness ? They must still be left (as far
as the Gospel hath concerned it self) in
the State, in which That pronounceth wil-
ful and habitual Sinners to be. The utmost
that can be said is, that they must be left to
the *uncovenanted Mercies* of God : and the
highest degree of hope which they can
have, must be founded upon this, that Al-
mighty God may possibly depart from his
settled Method ; and recede from the Terms
which He hath openly professed, for the sake
of those, who have lived, Year after Year,
in an open Violation of his Laws ; against
all the Checks of their Consciences, and all
the Calls of his Gospel. Which let *them*
believe, who can swallow, and embrace,
any

any Absurdities, rather than forsake their S E R M.
Sins. XVII.

HAVING, as I hope, very evidently 
shewn that there is nothing, in this Instance of the believing and penitent Malefactor, which can, with the least Colour of Reason, encourage any, who have been, through many Years, professed Christians, and habitual Sinners, to depend upon the Sorrow of their Death-beds, for Acceptance with God; and having thus finished what I proposed to discourse of from this Example: I shall now take occasion to enquire whether, in the nature of the thing it self, there be any greater Ground for Hope, than We have seen, there is in the Instance We have been considering. And this, I think, will be very proper, not only because the Subject naturally enough leads us to it; but because it is very observable, that one great Support of such unhappy Persons, as go on in a Course of Sin, and yet retain some Sense of Religion, and make Profession of Christianity, is the Hope which they have placed in the Sorrow of their Death-beds, as if there were some peculiar Charm,
and

SERM. and Efficacy, in *that*, above any other Sorrow, (which they falsely call Repentance,)  conceived, or expressed, in any other Part of their Lives.

Now, in what is it that this last Sorrow hath the Advantage over any other? In what it agrees with the Sorrow, and Regret, which a Man hath felt in the Time of his Health, it cannot be preferred before it: because it differs not from it. And in what it really differs from it, I fear, it will be found to have the Disadvantage on its side. For it seems to me that it is much less likely to be sincere, or such as would, upon Trial, prove effectual, than the other: it being probably rather extorted by the Prospect and Fear of Death, than by the Persuasion of Reason; and frequently accompanied with such Terrors, as make it rather a Distraction, than a rational Grief, or a conscientious Sorrow. Whereas, a Regret and Concern for past Sins, in Time of Health, and whilst a Man hath not so near a Prospect of a State of Retribution, may be supposed more sincere, and more likely to influence Him: because it may
justly

justly be thought to be more the Result of SERM.
Reason, and Judgment; and rather pro- XVII.
ceeding from a well-grounded Persuasion 
of the Man's own Mind, and the just Con-
sideration of the Nature of Things, than
from the terrible Dread of immediate Pu-
nishment.

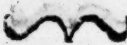
AND yet how is this last Sorrow usually
preferred; and accounted of a more excel-
lent Nature than any of the former? One
would think, merely because it is the last.
Whereas *that* can make no difference in
the Eyes of God: who always judgeth truly
from the nature of the Thing; and not
from the *Time*, or any of those inconfide-
rable Circumstances, which often hide the
true nature of things from mortal Eyes, and
finite Understandings. Nay, we our selves
cannot judge whether our own present Sor-
row, and Compunction, be of that nature
as that they would work in us true Repen-
tance and Amendment; were we entrusted
with more Opportunities of making the
Trial. And this is another Reason why we
should build nothing upon it, either in our
own Case, or that of others; because, even
supposing

SERM. supposing that it would be sincere, and effectual in its Influences, were more Time
XVII. allowed; yet this is a Matter wholly out of the reach of our Knowledge, and wholly impossible for us to judge of.

BUT, indeed, it is a very material Observation, that wicked Men have much less reason to think this last Sorrow thoroughly and undoubtedly sincere, than they have heretofore had to think any of their former Sorrows so; which yet, they know, have ended in nothing considerable. There are few professed Christians, even amongst the wickedest of them, who have not, one time or other, had some just and concerning Thoughts about that Course of Sin, and those wilful Vices, in which they have indulged themselves; who have not, one time or other, detested and resolved to forsake them, in the Days of their Health and Prosperity; when they had nothing to move them but the Nature of the thing, and the great Reasonableness of receiving, and obeying the Gospel. If, therefore, they have found that Regret, and Concern, which they have had, in the best Season,
and

and which had so good Ground for it, to SERM.
come to nothing ; to vanish into Air ; and XVII.
leave no good Influence, nor shew any 
Power, upon their Lives and Actions : up-
on what Accounts can they think, That Sor-
row would have any better, or more last-
ing Effect, were the Trial made, which
for aught they know, is wholly owing to
the present Fear of Death, and the near
Prospect of a future Punishment ; and con-
sequently will most probably vanish, when
that Fear, and that Prospect, are removed
from them ?

THEY will, I dare say, acknowledge no
such Sorrow of a sick Bed, to be of any
Effect, if they recover, and relapse to their
former Sins. And how many such Instan-
ces have they seen in others ? And how
often have they themselves relapsed, after a
better, and more reasonable, Sorrow, than
this can be esteemed ? And how then can
they so flatter themselves, as to imagine
that this last, and unproved, Sorrow, is
truly sincere ; and would be truly effectual,
were Opportunity given it to shew its Pow-
er, and display its Influences : when they
have

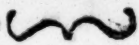
SERM. have not one probable Argument on their
xvii. side, to give Ground for such an Imagina-
tion ; but great Presumptions, and much
Experience, against it. So that there is no
Foundation for such a Supposition: and
yet, without it, there is not the least Sha-
dow of Hope, to support them. How
miserably deluded, therefore, must they be,
who thus rely upon a Reed ; who thus
build all their Hopes, and all their Expecta-
tion of Happiness, upon that which is of
a weaker nature, than what, they have ex-
perienced, to have deceived them already ;
who would vain escape Misery, and attain
to Happiness, and yet will take none but a
desperate Method, and such an one, as will
too certainly disappoint and cheat them at
last !

AND that they, who indulge themselves
in the Habit of any sort of Sin, may be the
more effectually sensible of this, I would
ask them, whether they believe that Al-
mighty God will punish any sort of Persons
in another State ; or whether there are any
Men in this World now, who shall be con-
demned, at the great Day, to that miserable
State

State which is threatned in the Gospel. If S E R M.
they pretend not to believe any such thing XVII.
as this ; why are they in such Fears, and 
in so great Concern, about it ? Why do
the Terrors of the Lord oppress them ? And
why do they betray so much Uneasiness,
at the Thoughts of appearing before Him ?
But if they do believe that thus it shall be
with some sort of Persons, (as they appear
to do by their Presages, and Apprehen-
sions ;) I would then ask, Who, they think,
they are, that shall inherit most of the An-
ger of God in that future State. Surely,
They, who, upon the account of their
whole Lives, do most deserve it. And
who are they that most deserve it ? It
must be either the *Wilful Sinners* of the
unbelieving World ; or the *Wilful Sin-*
ners, who are professed Christians, and en-
joy the Light, and Assistance, of Christ's
Gospel. And which of these Two do most
deserve it, is too evident to need many
Words. For who can be so unreasonable
as to think that *They* who sin not against
so clear Light, and so evident a Divine Au-
thority to the contrary, are in a more des-
perate

SERM. perate Condition, than those who are, or
 XVII. may be, fully acquainted with God's Will ;
 ~~~~~ who agree to the Reasonableness of it ; who  
 profess to fulfil it ; and yet live, through  
 their whole Lives, in express Contradiction  
 to it ? No, certainly, if our Saviour speak  
 Truth ; or if the Rule of Equity be con-  
 sulted ; *They shall be beaten with most  
 Stripes, who have known their Master's  
 Will, and have not done it ;* They, who have  
 had all fair Opportunities for Reformation,  
 and the Practice of Virtue, and have abused  
 them all to the Purposes of Vice.

IF, therefore, *They* shall be most mise-  
 rable in another State, who have most de-  
 served it, as without doubt they shall :  
 tell me, I beseech you, who can deserve it  
 more than the Christian, who hath the  
 greatest Favours, and Obligations, bestow-  
 ed upon Him ; the holiest Law to go-  
 vern Him ; the brightest Light to direct  
 Him ; the most powerful Assistance to  
 strengthen Him ; and yet goes on to sin,  
 against all the Obligations, and all the  
 Engagements, and all the Motives, to the  
 contrary, which are contained in his Pro-  
 fession.

feſſion. And conſequently, unleſs you will ſERM.  
ſuppoſe, and maintain, that there ſhall be XVII.  
no ſuch thing as Punishment in another   
World; but that all ſhall equally, either  
ſink into nothing, or be made happy; you  
muſt be perſuaded of this, as of a certain  
Truth, that the wicked Chriſtian, who con-  
tinues a wilful Sinner, under the Cloke of  
his holy Profeſſion, is the Perſon, who,  
becauſe He moſt of all deſerves this Punish-  
ment, ſhall therefore moſt undoubtedly in-  
herit it: Nor can his Grief, when He comes  
within View of it, alter the Caſe: for  
*Grief* is not Holineſs, nor Virtue; nor pro-  
bably would it end in the Practice of them:  
and *theſe* are the Things required of Chriſ-  
tians, in the Time of their Health, and  
during their Converſation in this World.  
But I need not, I hope, add any more  
Words in order to repreſent to you the  
Vanity and Weakneſs of that fatal Miſtake  
of ſome wilful Sinners, that the Sorrow,  
which they reſerve to be expreſſed upon  
their Death-beds, will atone for the proſti-  
gate, and unchriſtian, conduct of their  
whole paſt Lives.

SERM. AND now, Christians, what shall we  
XVII. say to these Things? Shall not all that  
~~~~ hath been urged to shew the Unreasonableness of those Hopes which are built upon any such Pretence, as I have now been examining, separated from a Life of Righteousness, and true Goodness: shall it not, I say, move us all to lay hold on the present Opportunity; and to *work out our Salvation, whilst the Day lasts; because the Night cometh,* (the Night of Sickness, and of Death,) *when no Man can work?* How happy would it be for us, would we be induced to live as becomes Christians; and worthy of that holy Name by which we are called; and of that Divine Master, to whom We have given up our selves? This is the Thing required of *Us*, who have Time allowed us to shew the Sincerity of our *Faith* and *Profession*: and this alone it is, that can entitle us to the Favour of God, and the Rewards of Heaven. If we be in earnest seeking after Happiness; let us not take the Road which leads to certain Misery: but that good Path which our Lord himself  
hath

hath marked out to us, both by his Ex-SERM.
ample, and his Precepts; which will infal- XVII.
libly bring us to his Heavenly Kingdom. ~~~~~
Amen!



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John D. Smith

John D. Smith is a member of the
Board of Directors of the
City of New York.

NEW YORK

The Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, considered.

SERMON XVIII.

MATTHEW XX. I, &c.

For the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Man that is an Householder, which went out early in the Morning to hire Labourers into his Vineyard, &c.



IN my last Discourse, I observed SERM. to you that some Persons had XVIII. mistaken and perverted the *Parable* in this Chapter; vainly arguing, from one Part of it, that the *last Hour*, or even the last Minute, of Life, may be sufficient for the Work of Repentance, and turning to God. In that, I only proposed one or two Considerations in general: but I now design

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to

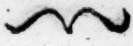
SERM. to handle this Matter more particularly,
 XVIII. that it may the more clearly be seen, not
 only that this *Parable* gives not the least
 Encouragement to any such Thought; but
 that it really proves to all, who profess
 Christianity, the absolute Necessity of Ho-
 linefs and Virtue, before the last Sicknefs,
 and Death, approach. In order to this, it
 will be necessary,

I. To lay before you an Account of the
Parable it self.

II. To shew you, what was intended to
 be signified by it.

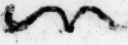
III. To prove that there is no Founda-
 tion in it, for any such Imagination, as
 that before-mentioned: but an actual De-
 claration of the contrary.

I. As for the *Parable* it self; it sets forth
 to us an *Houfholder* going forth into the
Market-place, to hire Men to come and
 work for Him, in his *Vineyard*; that He
 met with some sooner than He did with
 others; that those whom He hired latest,
 came as soon as He called and invited
 them; and laboured heartily for the Time
 that

that they were in his Vineyard; and, at SERM.
the End of their Day, were by his Favour XVIII.
rewarded, for that sincere and hearty, 
though short, Labour, with the same Re-
ward which He had agreed to bestow upon
those whom He hired much sooner. This
is the Sum of the *Parable*; as far as it
concerns my present Design: for it is not
of Importance to relate every particular
Circumstance of it. The main Matter here
to be considered, is the Reward bestowed
upon Those who came so late into the Vine-
yard.

II. I MUST therefore, now shew you
what was intended by this *Parable*. And
it is plain that it was designed to represent
the Method of God in dispensing his Fa-
vours and Rewards to the World. *The*
Kingdom of Heaven, or the Method of
God's dealing with Mankind in the Revela-
tion of his Will, and the calling of them
to himself, was to be set forth in it. But,
to be more particular.

I. IT is most probable, and, I believe,
certain, that the main, if not the whole,
Design of it, was to account for that great

SERM. Stumbling-block, as it was indeed, to the
 XVIII. ill-natured *Jews*; viz. God's calling in the
 *Gentiles* to Himself, after the *Jews*; and
 making them equal to These, in Privileges
 and Favours, upon their sincere Acceptance
 of his Invitation. In the *last Verse* of the
 preceeding *Chapter*, our Lord declareth that
many that are first shall be last, and the last
first: that is, that in those first called to
 the Knowledge of God, viz, the *Jews*,
 and those to be called after them, viz. the
Gentiles, God would make no difference;
 provided He found a sincere Disposition to
 obey his Call, and serve Him truly. Then
 immediately, at the *first Verse* of the xxth
Chapter, our Lord goes on to illustrate
 what He had there said; and to discover
 the Equity of it.

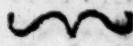
IN this Sense, then, of the *Parable*, Al-
 mighty God is represented as calling Man-
 kind at several Ages of the World: the
Jews, and their Forefathers, in the first
 Ages; and, in the *last Age*, viz. that of
 the Gospel, as calling the *Gentile* World to
 the Knowledge of himself; and admitting
 them to equal Privileges with the *Jews*,
 who

who thought themselves his peculiar People; and rewarding them after the same manner, upon their sincere Compliance with his Terms, and Acceptance of his Invitation. The *Gentile* World are represented as coming into his Gospel, upon his Call; and living worthy of it after their coming into it: and our Lord is represented, at the End of the Day of this Life, as rewarding Them, as much as the *Jews* themselves, who were called to the Knowledge of God, in a so much earlier Age. SERM. XVIII.

THAT which makes it most probable that this was the true Intent of our Lord, in this *Parable*, is, that this calling of the *Gentiles* to equal Privileges with the *Jews*, was certainly a Matter which was to be opened by due Degrees, even to the best-temper'd amongst them; who were averse enough to all Thoughts of it: and likewise, that there is express mention made in it, of the murmuring of those *who were hired first*, against the Master of the House, for rewarding the *last* equally with them. For this agrees very well with the uncon-
quered

SERM. quered Prejudices of the *Jewish* Nation ;
 XVIII. and that Selfishness of Mind, by which they
 ~~~~~ had set themselves apart from the rest of  
 the World, and could not bear to think of  
 any who might be equal Sharers with them-  
 selves in the Favour of God, whose People  
 they had so long been. But it doth not  
 seem so well to agree with a good Chris-  
 tian's Temper ; to repine, and murmur,  
 that any other sincere Persons are made as  
 happy, by the Favour of Almighty God, as  
 Himself is. It rather adds to such an one's  
 Happiness, to see others happy, than sows  
 and spoils it. But,

2. LET us suppose that the *Parable* was  
 intended to signify to us the Method of  
 God's dealing with particular Persons, in  
 the great Affair of their Happiness, and Sal-  
 vation. And then, what is set forth in it,  
 is this, that Almighty God, doth, in his  
 Providence, call and invite some Persons  
 to the Christian Religion sooner than  
 others ; and that those who come latest to  
 the Knowledge of his Will, if they readily  
 lay hold on his Invitation ; if they accept  
 his Offer ; (nor doth the Parable go any  
 farther

farther than the *first* Offer;) and comply SERM.  
with his Terms; and enter into his Church; XVIII.  
and labour in it; working out their own   
Salvation, and producing all manner of  
good Fruits, during that Season of Life  
which is allowed them after this Call, and  
Invitation: that those, I say, who are thus  
called, and do thus behave themselves up-  
on such Call, shall, for that hearty Since-  
rity, be equalled in reward, by Almighty  
God, to those whom they would have cer-  
tainly equalled in their Labours, if they had  
been as soon called and invited into his  
Church.

III. HAVING thus laid down what was  
certainly, or might possibly be, intended by  
this *Parable*: it will be the easier to shew  
that there is no Foundation in it for any  
such Imagination, as that the late Sorrow,  
falsely called Repentance, of any Christian  
who hath been a wilful habitual Sinner  
through the whole Course of his Life and  
Health, will atone at last, for his Sins; and  
make him the Object of God's Favour:  
For,

I. IF



SERM. 1. IF we take the first Account now  
 XVIII. given of the meaning of this *Parable*,  
 which is certainly the true one ; then there  
 is nothing contained in it, but that the  
*Gentile* World, though called to the Know-  
 ledge of God much later than the *Jews*,  
 yet, upon their acceptance of that Call,  
 and their hearty application of themselves  
 to Christian good Works, shall be accepted  
 to equal Privileges, with the *Jews*, who  
 had so long before them, been the peculiar  
 People of God. This, therefore, cannot  
 possibly bear any relation to the Case of  
 such particular Christians, as have been long  
 called to the Knowledge of God, and have  
 wilfully neglected to do the Works of him  
 that called them. No two Matters can be  
 more distant from one another, than these  
 two are : And, therefore, there can be no  
 imaginable Argument drawn, from one to  
 the other. But,

2. SUPPOSING that the *Second* inter-  
 pretation be pitch'd upon : yet even upon  
 this Supposition, the *Parable* sets forth all  
 of them that are hired, as *Labourers*. The  
*Houfholder* went out to hire *Labourers* into  
 his

his Vineyard: not such as professed only to SERM.  
labour; but such as would actually do it. XVIII.  
So that it is to none but such, that he agrees  
to give any Reward. And when the Per-  
sons hired are spoken of, they are all de-  
scribed as truly setting themselves to labour,  
as soon as they are invited, and called in.  
All the difference, is, that some are met  
with earlier; and some later; but as soon as  
they are spoken to, they all immediately  
leave their former Station; and apply them-  
selves to work. There is mention, indeed,  
of some *standing idle*: but it was in the  
*Market-place*; and it was only because they  
had met with *no body to hire them* to work.  
But as soon as they are hired, there is no  
mention of their Idleness in the Vineyard:  
but there they work'd immediately, as soon  
as they enter'd; and continued to do so, as  
long as the Day lasted.

WHAT is there then for a Christian to  
learn from hence? Why, If this *Parable*  
touch his particular Case; what He must  
learn, is this, *viz.* that the Supreme Houf-  
holder, when He calls him into his Vine-  
yard, the Church, hires him as a *Labourer*;  
and,

S E R M. and, under that Notion only, agrees with  
 XVIII. Him for a Reward; that, as soon as He is  
 ~~~~~ called to the Knowledge of the Gospel, his  
 time is come for beginning to work; that,
 as long as He lives a Professor of the Gos-
 pel, so long doth the *Day* last in which He
 is to work; that, if He entred into this
 Religion in his young and early Days, He
 must in his young and early Days labour in
 the Works of it; that, if He were old be-
 fore He came to the Knowledge of it, and
 had Christianity proposed to him, He must
 immediately lay hold on the Proposal; He
 must heartily profess himself a Disciple of
 the Master who invites him; He must im-
 mediately set himself to his Work, and con-
 tinue to approve himself a faithful Servant
 to Him, as long as his State of Probation
 lasts. This is what this *Parable* plainly sets
 forth. For there is not one of those men-
 tion'd, who did not come into the Vine-
 yard, and work in it, as soon as He was
 called; not one who was idle, unless out
 of necessity before He was hired; not one
 who continued idle afterwards, or did not
 heartily work in the Vineyard; not one
 who

who delayed his coming in, or used any SERM.
pretence to avoid working, while the time XVIII.
for working lasted: And therefore, we
find that, their Sincerity being equal, which
is the Ground of all, their Lord made their
Rewards equal.

If, therefore We will apply this to the
State of particular Persons in Christ's Vine-
yard, the Church; there can be no hopes
of Reward, according to this *Parable*, but
to such as carefully and conscientiously set
themselves to work in their State of Trial;
to such as come in, when God calls them;
and make use of all their Time afterwards,
to promote his Honour, and work out their
own Salvation. The Person, who is called
last, and yet hath a Reward, is one who
hath not heard of the Gospel till Age is
come upon him; but, as soon as He doth
hear of it, embraces it; enters into the Ser-
vice of it, and shews himself, in the time
He hath to live after this, a true and sincere
Disciple of it, by the amendment and re-
formation of his Life.

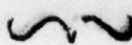
HAD it been so indeed, that our Lord
had represented the *Houſholder*, as calling

SERM. Men into his Vineyard; and, after they had

XVIII. enter'd into it, and professed to work, and

yet spent their time in it idly, or mischievously; either in doing nothing, or in ruining his Interest; as rewarding such Persons equally with those who had labour'd hard; and this merely for their expressing a Sorrow at Night, for the wilful Faults of the whole Day: something then might have been urged; and there might be some colour from hence, for hoping that Almighty God will at last reward Christians, who profess his Service, and enter his Vineyard as Labourers, and live useless, wicked, and profligate Lives; merely for their sorrowful Concern for their Sins, at the end of their Day of Trial. But, as the Case is; and as the *Parable* is expressed: what is there, I beseech you, in it, that can possibly encourage any such Hope? Nay, what is there in it, but what forcibly shews the necessity of Christian good Works, for the Justification of all who are called into Christ's Vineyard; whether early or late; whether at the beginning, or towards the end, of their Days?

WE,

WE, for our parts, generally speaking, S E R M.
are called into God's Vineyard, at the very XVIII.
first Hour of the Day, at the dawning of 
our Lives ; educated in the Christian Reli-
gion ; called upon, day after day, to live
worthy of that Holy Vocation wherewith
we are called, and of that Profession which
we make. We are not, therefore, of the
Number of those who stood *Idle in the*
Market-place, merely because no one would
hire them ; and so were but late called
into the Vineyard. But we have been long
ago *hired* by God himself ; and invited in-
to his Service by the promise of the most
immense and unspeakable Rewards. If,
therefore, we *stand Idle* ; it is in his Vine-
yard, in which we undertook to do him
Service. And if it be asked, *why stand*
you here all the day Idle ? We cannot
have that to urge, *because no Body hath*
hired us : for God Almighty is our Master ;
and we are his professed Servants. And
we can have nothing to expect but the Pu-
nishment due to such Servants, as hypocri-
tically pretend to serve, while they disho-
nour and disobey, their Master. Little will

SERM. it avail us to take Refuge at last in Sorrow ;

XVIII. when, at the Evening, or at Night, our

W Work is to be examined ; and the Enquiry to be made, what we have done in that Service which we have undertaken. If we appeal to this *Parable* ; that shews forth no Reward, but for such as have actually worked in the Service of their Master, from the time of their admission into the Vineyard, to the time of their being removed out of it : and this will administer but little Comfort to any, who have spent the time due to their Master, in the Service of his greatest Enemy. And the mere pretending to be his Disciple, or Servant, will be so far from lessening, that it must increase, the Guilt.

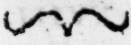
IN the *Chapter* following This which I am now considering, at the 28th Verse, our Lord proposeth the following Case to the *Jews*. *A certain Man had two Sons, and He came to the first and said, Son, go work to day in my Vineyard. He answered and said, I will not. But afterward He repented, and went. And He came to the second, and said likewise. And He answered*

answered and said, I go, Sir, and went SERM.
not. Whether of them twain did the Will XVIII.
of his Father? They say unto Him, the ~ ~

First. He proposeth this, to let them know that it was not the Profession of being his Children, and his People; not the *calling Him, Lord, Lord*, that would satisfy Almighty God; but the doing his Will; and that the professing to do it, did but aggravate the Fault of not sincerely answering that Profession. He goes on to tell them, that those very *Harlots* and *Publicans*, who, though before at a distance from all pretences to serve God, yet repented, and were converted by the Preaching of *John the Baptist*, would go into the Kingdom of God, and be accepted to his Favour, long before such as *They* were; who, making great Professions of belonging to God, and being his People, yet, were scandalously deficient in performing his Will, and constantly employed in provoking Him by their Disobedience. This is the meaning of those Words; and what follow. *Verily, I say unto you, that the Publicans, and the Harlots, go into the Kingdom of God before you.*

SERM. Not that any, continuing such Sinners,
 XVIII. could ever arrive at Happiness : but, as it
 follows, that such Sinners, repenting at the
 Preaching of *John the Baptist*, and reform-
 ing their Lives; even the vile *Publicans*,
 so much detested by the *Jews*, should be
 vastly preferred before them, with all their
 Professions, and all their Protestations.

THE *Vineyard*, therefore, is not a place
 of Ostentation ; but of Work : not framed
 to feed and support the Idle ; but to em-
 ploy the Diligent : not made to adorn, and
 defend, all those that enter it ; but to be
 adorned, and defended, by those who pre-
 tend to come into it. The very Notion of
 it is, that it wants their Help, and Cultiva-
 tion. This is what the great Master of it
 expects. This is what he hires his Labour-
 ers for. If, therefore, the Reward be so
 great, and so certain, for all, who enter as
 soon as they are invited ; and sincerely la-
 bour as soon as they are entered : how great,
 and how certain, must be the Punishment
 of those who act the Reverse of this ; who
 enter indeed, with a Profession of work-
 ing, but basely desert the Cause, and pro-
 stitute

stitute the Honour, and disregard the Com- SERM.
mands of that great Master who called and XVIII.
invited them to his Service. 

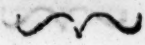
So that from this *Parable* it is impossible to collect any thing to sooth professed Christians in their hopes of being accepted without a Life of Holiness and Virtue : nay, it is impossible, one would think, not to see that the very design and intent of it, supposing it to respect particular Persons, must be to shew that it is indispensably required of all, at what time soever they are called to the Knowledge of God and his Gospel, to obey that Call ; and conscientiously to employ the time allowed them, after this, in the good Works which God hath marked out to them in his Law. Far be it, therefore, from any Christian, who hath long ago entered into God's Vineyard, to argue himself, from this part of the Gospel, into any shadow of Hope, whilst He is in a state of supine Neglect of his Duty, or wilful Disobedience to God.

AND if we look into any other of those *Parables*, by which our Lord represents the Proceedings of Almighty God with his Ser-

SERM. wants; we shall find the plainest Discourage-
 XVIII. ment to all such Hopes. When He repre-
 ~~~~~sents Him as a Master, intrusting several sorts  
 of Talents to several Servants, *Matth. xxv.*  
*14.* we find that He certainly expects an  
 actual Improvement of those *Talents*; not  
 only, that they should not be made use of  
 against his Honour and Interest, but that  
 they should not be buried, and rendred use-  
 less: And accordingly, that, when one of  
 those Servants appears to his Lord to have  
 buried what was intrusted to Him, that He  
 might be sure to restore it whole at his re-  
 turn; the Sentence is, *Cast ye the unprofi-*  
*table Servant into outer Darknes: there*  
*shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* See  
 from hence what Almighty God certainly  
 expects from those who are called to his  
 Knowledge, and his Service. Nor could all  
 the Sorrow of that Servant, at his *Master's*  
 return, atone, or compensate, for his past  
 ill Conduct.

IN the *xxist Chapter* God is represented  
 as *letting out his Vineyard to Husbandmen*,  
 who abused his Mercy; and, at last, as *de-*  
*stroying them, and letting out his Vineyard*

to

*to others who should render him the Fruits* SERM  
*in their Seasons.* In another *Parable*, chap. XVIII.  
xviii. at the end, He is represented, as *de-*   
*delivering over to the Tormenters*, a Servant,  
only for being unmerciful, and implacable,  
towards his Fellow-Servant. Doth all this  
look, as if he would accept of any thing,  
at last, at the Hands of those who are called  
into his Service, instead of an hearty and  
sincere Obedience; or, as if He did not  
lay a Duty, an indispensable Duty, upon  
them: the Duty of reforming whatever is  
amiss in themselves: and of flourishing in  
all those good Fruits, and good Works,  
which are well-pleasing in his Eyes?

AND thus have I done what I designed:  
And, as I hope, have, in this, and several  
other Discourses, effectually shewn the great  
Weakness, and Folly, of a Christian's rely-  
ing upon any thing for Salvation, but the  
actual Reformation, and Amendment, of  
what he knows to be sinful in himself.

I CAN at present think but of one thing  
more that remains to be touched upon, be-  
fore we leave this Subject. There are some  
Christians, I am sensible, who are truly



SERM. convinced that this is a just Account of the  
XVIII. Matter; that their only Hopes must be in  
the actual amendment of their Lives, and  
practice of Virtue, whilst God gives them  
opportunity; and that all other Hopes are  
vain and deluding: and are therefore resolved  
to reform what is bad in themselves. But then,  
they deferr this great Work; they are unwilling  
to do it immediately: but hope that what they  
Design may be as well performed some time  
hereafter. They place not their Hopes in any  
thing but Amendment: but they put off this  
Amendment till another Season. A few Considerations  
will shew us the extreme Hazard, and Folly, of  
such a Proceeding. For,

I. SUPPOSING that they are taken away before they have put this Resolution into effect; they are, by their own Confession, in a most deplorable, inexcusable, Condition: being removed from hence, in a State, which they themselves account to be a State condemned by God in his Gospel. It is the Amendment of their Lives which, they know, He requires; and the resolution of Amendment, is not Amendment.

Nay,

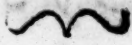
Nay, indeed, it will be so far from helping SERM.  
them, upon this Supposition; that it will XVIII.  
aggravate their Guilt and their Punishment,   
that they have not actually done what they  
knew to be their indispensable Duty to do.  
And who knows when his last Hour may  
come? Is this State a State of Certainty,  
and Duration? *In the midst of Life, are*  
*we not in Death?* Do we not see, every  
day, Persons as likely, nay, more likely  
than ourselves, to continue here, called to  
give account of their Lives? What is it  
then we can hope for? or how can we  
think it consistent with the lowest Degree  
of Prudence, to delay that which we know  
not whether we can ever have an opportu-  
nity to perform, unless we lay hold on the  
present? But,

2. WHAT is it that can induce Men to  
delay this great, and necessary Work? Is  
it the Difficulty of it at present? Alas!  
*that* will be so far from being diminished,  
that it will be increased, by time. Every  
Step we take, in most of the Vices, ren-  
ders the attempt of Reformation so much  
the more difficult. As we grow old, evil  
Habits

SERM. Habits grow old upon us. Custom be-  
 XVIII. comes like Nature it self; not to be put  
 off, or broken through, but with a diffi-  
 culty which we become willing at last to  
 think insuperable. This made the *Prophet*  
 cry out, *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin,*  
*or the Leopard his Spots? then shall ye*  
*also, that are accustomed to do evil, learn to*  
*do well.* He thought it such a difficulty,  
 as, in the figurative Style, might be repre-  
 sented by Matters utterly impossible. Cer-  
 tainly, to delay an important Matter; a  
 Business necessary to be performed, be-  
 cause it is difficult; when every Moment  
 that it is delayed, will add to the difficulty  
 of it; is to put it more out of our Power  
 than it is at present: It is to render our  
 Work more difficult, because it is difficult  
 already; which is the most inexcusable  
 Weakness.

OR, Is it that Men hope that Time, and  
 Years, will naturally wear out their Inclina-  
 tions to Sin; and that then they shall find  
 it a much more easy Matter to live as they  
 ought? Alas! Time, and Years, bring an  
 Inclination to some Vices along with them,  
 against



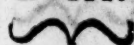
against which we shall find enough to do to S E R M.  
guard our selves ; and present us with Evils, XVIII.  
under which alone we shall have enough to   
do to support our selves : and to some former Vices they add a Strength, and Force, which they had not before. Nay, What one ill Temper, or bad Inclination or Passion, is ever known to be removed, or totally cured, by Years ; after an Indulgence hath been given to it through the former Course of Life ? It is the Mind, that is the Seat of Vice : and if *that* remain corrupt and vitiated, the Man is still corrupt and vicious in the Eyes of God ; how much soever his outward Appearance may be altered in other respects.

BUT could it be so, that Age and Years would certainly remove all that Viciousness, which Custom had been breeding : yet how little likelihood, as I observed before, is there of arriving at such a Term of Years ? And how much more likelihood is there of the contrary ? And if we should ; and that should be the Case : yet how would all the Beauty and Reward of Virtue be gone ; What a Return would it be to Almighty God,

SERM. God, for all his Long-suffering, to present  
xviii. him at last with a Heart dead to all the  
~~~~~ Purposes of Life ; rendered useless, and insignificant by old Age ? What an Affront to Him, to have spent all the best part of Life in the Service of his Enemy ; and then to come and offer Him a Service that hath nothing in it : or, to profess to serve Him, when we are past the time in which it can be acceptable to Him ? Is it Virtue, for Creatures in a State of Probation, to leave off Vices, which they cannot retain ? to forsake Customs, which they cannot follow ? To pretend to relinquish Habits, which have relinquished them ? For, in truth, this is the Case, upon the present Supposition. They design to serve God with the Dregs of Life ; They leave not their Vices, but their Vices leave them ; They abandon not their Sins, but their Sins have abandoned them.

TRY, therefore, how such an Offer, and such a Dedication of your selves to God, after a multitude of Years spent in the hearty Service of his Adversary, will found. Suppose your selves in his Presence, addressing to Him in this manner.

“ Lord !

“ Lord ! We have indeed spent the Vigour S E R M.
“ of our whole Life, in the Service of Sin ; XVIII.
“ in dishonouring Thee ; and in neglecting 
“ thy Religion. The time is now come, See Arch-
bishop
“ when we can sin no longer, when our Tillotson's
Sermon con-
cerning the
Advant-
tages of
Early Piety.
“ Vices have abandoned us ; and Human So-
“ ciety hath as it were excluded us. Behold !
“ now, that we cannot well do any thing else
“ we offer to Thee our Services, which are
“ without Vigour or Force ; and present to
“ Thee the Dregs of Life, and the Refuse of
“ all our Years.” This is what every Man
must in effect say, that puts off his Amend-
ment till Old-age ; upon supposition that He
shall arrive at it ; and that then He shall be
able, and willing, to sin no longer. And if
there cannot be a greater Affront imagined,
than such an Offer ; and if it be the greatest
Shame even to think of such a Return to
God as this : let not any Consideration in
the World move any of us to defer so in-
dispensable a Duty to a time so improper,
and so utterly unfit for it.

LET us consider what hath been said ;
that our Days are uncertain ; and, there-
fore, that 'tis Madness to put off, even for
one

SERM. one Day, that Work which is certainly necessary; that if we should have more time allowed us, yet our Business of Amendment would grow more and more difficult every Day; that the present time is that in which it is most easy, and most likely, to be effected; and that if we could suppose any such time to be coming to us in this State, in which our Vices will forsake us whether we will or no, we must not expect that this shall be accounted our Virtue, and reckoned to us for Reward, any more than our ceasing to sin, when we are laid in our Graves: or that God will accept the Present of our Service, when all our past Health and Life have been wilfully spent in the Prosecution of our Lusts; and we now offer it to Him, because we know not what else to do with it.

WHAT remains, therefore, but that we immediately set about that Work, which cannot be too soon begun; nor too soon finished? A Work so necessary, that it is impossible to be happy without it? That nothing delude us into a Delay, in a Case in which the least Delay may be our Ruine? That

That no Pretence, of what sort soever, di-SERM.
vert us from the entring into the Paths of XVIII.
that Holiness, *without which no Man shall* ~~~~~
see the Lord? Nothing but this can give
us Peace of Conscience here: nothing but
this can assure us of the least Degree of
Happiness hereafter. And God grant that
this may be the Effect of what hath been
said; for Jesus Christ's sake our Lord! To
whom, with the Father, and Holy Spirit, be
all Glory now, and for evermore. Amen!

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